

THE ACCIDENTAL CHANGE AGENT:
USING THE AIR FORCE IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

The following study analyzes the impact of the Air Force's role as an agent in the process of social change. Throughout the analysis, the historical evidence helps to answer the following research question: *How has the United States used the Air Force as an effective agent in the process of social change?* The Air Force and other branches of the military provide a unique opportunity to the Commander-in-Chief and Congress, who can implement monumental changes in personnel policies. This study seeks to illustrate the benefits of such an arrangement, as the historical record indicates the Air Force routinely demonstrated its professionalism and leadership capacity, aiding society in the process of social change.

Chapter 1 provides the background and significance of the research. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide the details of the study's three case studies: racial integration, women in combat roles, and the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Each case study is analyzed according to three comparative factors—policy, society, and military organization. Chapter 5 provides a thorough analysis across all three of the case studies, highlighting similarities and differences, and addressing the major research questions outlined. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the limitations faced in this study. Ultimately, the study found that the Air Force has served as a leading proponent in social change at times, and lagged behind the prevailing American viewpoint at others.

One of the primary benefits to qualitatively analyzing the Air Force's role in social change is the awareness it brings regarding the value of diversity. As the Air Force has demonstrated, military effectiveness, common concern, and decency override ideological beliefs and discriminatory practices grounded in ignorance or hatred. In the future, as the Air Force faces the next major social issue, the historical record should serve as proof that heightened alert and rhetoric regarding impact on cohesion, physical concerns, or disruption to military effectiveness, are often inflated and as each case study indicates, proven wrong by successful policy implementation with a professional Airmen corps.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige, and even his life for the welfare of others.

--Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Strength to Love

Background

The history of the United States includes troubling instances of hatred and discrimination against individuals based on race, gender, and sexual orientation. Unfortunately, the Air Force is not immune to such social ills. The Air Force and other branches of the military can serve as microcosms of America, reflecting both the positive and negative qualities of the greater society. Although there are several occasions when the Air Force has lagged in implementing changes reflective of popular sentiment in the country, there are also instances when the Air Force departed from societal norms and served as a leading proponent in the process of social change. Even if such leadership has been by accident, the trust afforded to the branches of the military and close observation by domestic and international audiences has enabled the Air Force's actions to prove consequential. The unique nature of the military as an organization beholden to the orders of a Head of State serving as Commander-in-Chief, lends itself to use by the chief executive to make changes in either a rapid or a protracted fashion.

As stated in the 2010 National Security Strategy, "More than any other action that we have taken, the power of America's example has helped spread freedom and democracy abroad."¹ Indeed, there are consequences and opportunities available through social change. The intent of this study is to examine the extent of the Air Force's impact in the process of social change in American society.

Today, the Air Force values diversity and deems it a "military necessity."² Yet, on the eve of major changes, there remains reluctance among military personnel as

¹ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2010), 36.

² Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs, Key Talking Points Memorandum, 4th Quarter 2012.

indicated in arguments made during recent debates on the repeal of the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (DADT)” policy. Such persistent reluctance to change is eerily similar to arguments made against the racial integration of the Air Force and against removing barriers to women serving in combat. Many individuals in the Department of Defense, Congress, and the public anticipated difficulties in discipline, cohesion, and military effectiveness once each of these particular policy changes took effect. However, few if any of the predictions became reality in the case of racial integration, women in combat, or the repeal of DADT.

Twenty-first century America has become increasingly tolerable, diverse, and connected. However, overcoming the strength of prejudices, hatred, or other injustices has relied upon changes in perspective. Robert H. Lauer, a social scientist and author of a number of books on social movements, describes in *Perspectives on Social Change* how there are some people concerned by such changes and hence, serve as a hurdle to advancing meaningful change.³ Through an in-depth review of past incidences and an examination of the perspectives held by individuals on both sides of the arguments, one can increase the prospects of purposeful social change in the future. America is responsible for ensuring its own military personnel policies reflect the values it espouses worldwide, making it clear there is justification for research into the role of the Air Force in social change. As leaders and policy-makers consider decisions on issues of social change in the future, findings in this study’s examination of the Air Force’s progress in the past will prove enlightening.

Research Question and Importance

How has the United States used the Air Force as an effective agent in the process of social change? Answering this question allows one to draw lessons from the Air Force’s past that might inform its future. Many of the arguments made during the lead up to President Barack Obama’s repeal of DADT, echoed arguments made against earlier legislative changes related to social policies. As such, the need for discussion on the topic of social injustices and the Air Force’s role in addressing them appears necessary.

As the quote by Dr. King at the start of this introduction suggests, the true measure of an individual is where he stands when the situation is difficult, uncomfortable

³ Robert H. Lauer, *Perspectives on Social Change* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1973), ix.

and perhaps controversial. Although an organization rather than an individual, the same can be said for the USAir Force. Ultimately, in basic military terms, injustices of any kind in the Air Force are counterproductive to the mission and conflict with established principles. There is value in reflecting the diverse nature of the country, and Air Force members will benefit from discussion of the major instances when its policy changes played a role in the process of social change.

Evidence

The majority of the evidence utilized in this study has come from secondary sources to include academic interpretation of the events, historical accounts, and findings from other related research projects. There are also a number of primary sources to include personal accounts of individuals involved in the political decision-making, as well as those affected by the outcomes and directly impacted by the issue, through interviews and written communication.

Methodology

This study utilizes an historical, comparative analysis to answer the primary research question. The analysis will center on essential factors related to race, gender, and sexual orientation as exemplified in the following three case studies: 1. Executive Order 9981 signed in July of 1948, with which President Harry S. Truman abolished racial discrimination in the military; 2. The integration of women in combat roles; and 3. President Obama's 2011 Repeal of DADT. The analytical factors studied across the evidence include policy, society, and the military organization. Each case study will include a discussion of the policy specifics, revealing the decision making process behind the policy changes. Each historical case study includes analysis of societal factors in terms of domestic politics, social barriers and connections of the military's policy change to the larger society. In addition, the military organization factor will reveal issues related to discipline, physical concerns, leadership and policy implementation.

Upon exploration of the data, several criteria will help assess the validity of the evidence. The research process will assess how well the evidence supported or negated the argument that the Air Force played a critical role in the process of social change. What connections are there between the Air Force's decision and societal changes made? The historical record will help determine if the actual outcomes of the policy change

vindicated or refuted arguments waged prior to the policy change. Does the evidence verify or counter the claim that arguments against social progress in the military proved unwarranted? Other criteria include the credibility of the sources and historical accuracy. When available and appropriate, quantitative data analysis will enhance support for the argument.

The Case Studies

The reason for choosing the three case studies is their potential to provide insights into the way forward not only in the aftermath of the repeal of DADT, but also in future social change as well. Additionally, each case study proved reflective of a larger social dialogue, providing much information related to the role of the Air Force in the process of social change. While the research contained herein is limited to the US Air Force, a more in depth study would include analysis across each of the branches of the military, as well as consideration of international services. The following discussion provides a road map to the study presented.

Race-Integration of the Air Force

Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of the historical context surrounding President Truman's Executive Order to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination of the armed forces. Many people recall Truman's important decision made in 1948, yet any academic discussion of the policy must include acknowledgment of the efforts made by service members, racial equality advocates, and public officials in the years leading up to the policy change. Additionally, research helps reveal how societal norms and demands influenced Truman's decision and vice versa.

In order to reveal the role, if any, the Air Force had as a social change agent, the policy itself is broken down into several aspects including the key decision-makers, specific actions called for in Truman's order and the Air Force's own directives and implementation. The chapter also seeks to explain the connection between American domestic issues and the policy of segregation, and subsequent calls for integration. Ironically, research reveals there were doubts among black and white communities as to how successful integration could be, while many leaders sought to utilize the military as an impetus for change in the larger society.

Gender-Women in Combat Roles

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the irony of rules against women serving in combat roles, as women have actually served in combat conditions since the early days of the country's fight for independence. As revealed in the historical account, social norms and expectations have often kept the country from properly acknowledging contributions of women as equal in sacrifice or importance to male soldiers. Throughout a number of military conflicts, women have sought to carry out their perceived civic duty.

While the Air Force proved a leader in terms of opening up opportunities for women in nearly all of its specialty codes, the other branches of the military retained barriers to gender integration for reasons that echo those given against racial integration. Over time, the military necessity and meaningful contributions of women have led to increased awareness for the need to change the policy restricting women's service. Although there are segments of the American population who believe a woman's rightful duty remains in the home taking care of her family, in the twenty-first century, women are increasingly seen as capable and influential contributors to the workforce. Moreover, as revealed by a January 2013 announcement by the Department of Defense regarding its plans to remove the final barriers to full integration of women into combat roles, it is time the policy matched the sacrifices already made by women in each of the services.

Sexual Orientation-The Repeal of DADT

Although the repeal of the ban on gays serving openly in the military is only 18 months old, there is tremendous benefit gained from analysis of the policy's historical context. Chapter 4 includes background information regarding the long-held belief that homosexuality is incompatible with military service. Stemming back to World War I-era Articles of War, the military has retained policies that allow for the dismissal of gay men and women. However, recent history includes the 1993 compromise between President Clinton and Congress commonly referred to as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which many saw as unfair, and the 2011 decision to repeal that policy by President Obama.

As revealed in Chapter 4, a cultural readiness for change enabled President Obama's efforts, allowing him to repeal the ban on gays serving openly, and bringing the military in line with the social norm. Analysis of the policy, society, and military

organization factors reveals that the claims proposed as justification against the policy change once again, never came to fruition, and the military has benefitted from the policy change. The Air Force and the other branches of the military have proven themselves as professional organizations capable of change, as they have in each of the other case studies.

This examination of the extent of the Air Force's impact in the process of social change in the greater community begins with the first case study—racial integration of the Air Force. It is a fitting starting point as the landmark Executive Order passed by President Truman provides insight into the unique relationship between the military and society. Upon completion of the discussion of racial integration in terms of policy, society, and military organization, one can determine if and how the Air Force served as a change agent.

Chapter 2

Racial Integration of the Air Force

If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

--John Lewis

When the United States' armed forces transitioned from a policy of restricting and segregating the service of African-Americans to one of equal opportunity and integration, it was "truly a social revolution."¹ The racist personnel policies practiced throughout the armed forces, including the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF), originated from prejudices inherited throughout decades of such thinking in the United States.

Ultimately, President Harry S. Truman's decision to integrate the armed forces was not solely an altruistically or politically motivated action, but the result of a number of factors including the determination of the individuals most affected by the racist practices. The armed forces became the most integrated segment of life in America, largely through a process initiated by the stroke of a President's pen. Prior to discussion of the specific policy changes and the facts surrounding their implementation, a brief review of the historical context is appropriate.

As Richard M. Dalfiume describes in *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, many writers claim a "Negro revolution or revolt" occurred in the mid-1950s to early 1960s, and hence ignore the impact of World War II.² During this period, the hypocrisy of the United States fighting abroad against Adolf Hitler's racist ideology with its own segregated military force and mostly segregated public back home, proved disconcerting for many. The apparent disconnect between the democratic rhetoric preached abroad and the mistreatment of African-Americans attempting to serve their country with honor was part of the argument used in the fight for equality in the ranks.³

Military service has always served a significant role in the struggle for African-Americans seeking full and equal citizenship, considering the understandable expectation that citizens have a responsibility to fight and sacrifice for the country. As such, many

¹ Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts 1939-1953* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 1.

² Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 2.

Prior to the United States' official entry into the war, discussion of restrictions on the service of African Americans remained an important part of the dialogue in race-relations. Upon entry into the war, the issue became even more emotionally charged.

³ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 2.

white Americans would resort to extreme efforts to deny African-Americans the ability to serve in the same capacity as themselves.⁴ Throughout American history, the reluctance to allowing African-Americans to serve would hold up until a crisis where there was an overwhelming need for increased manpower. As an example of the temporary reversal of exclusion policies out of military necessity, 5,000 “Negroes” served in the American Revolutionary War.⁵ Additionally, during the closing years of the Civil War, more than 10 percent of the Union army troops were black.⁶ Racist premises stemming back to America’s founding had not faded by the 1920s and 1930s and would serve as the foundation for troubled black and white race relations for a number of decades.⁷ Arguments waged against integration in the military reflected popular racist theories and claims in larger society.

Justification for denial or restrictions on African-American service included claims the “negro” was racially inferior due to physical, mental and moral characteristics and lacked the capacity to command because of a deficiency in courage.⁸ Scientific reasoning helped perpetuate such theories, as many believed that whites had greater cranial activity and larger brains resulting in their superiority. When blacks did receive excellent scores on intelligence tests, the desire to discount such contradictions led reports to claim the individual possessed a “heavy strain of white blood.”⁹ Additionally, critics would ignore the fighting performance of African-Americans in the Civil, Indian, and Spanish-American Wars, as leaders made decisions regarding the extent of their service in the world wars.¹⁰ As Alan Gropman highlights in *The Air Force Integrates*, the Army Air Corps’ initial exclusion of African-Americans serving in any capacity ignored the accomplishments of many exceptional individuals. In particular, the example of Eugene Jacque Bullard, the first African-American combat pilot, who flew in the Lafayette Flying Corps supporting the French during World War I, did

⁴ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 1.

⁵ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 5.

⁶ Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates: 1945-1964, Second Edition* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 3.

⁷ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 1.

⁸ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 3.

⁹ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 2.

¹⁰ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 3.

not weigh on the Air Corps' racist position.¹¹ Indeed, the foundation for later racial disturbances stems from such early held beliefs and denigration of African-American accomplishments.

Studies conducted in the interwar period, including one conducted by the Army War College, revealed a belief that "black social inequality" itself made the prospect of close association between whites and blacks serving together inimical to harmony and ideal efficiency.¹² Additionally, considering segregation was a large part of the country's civilian life, the Army held it should follow suit. Studies also revealed that 88 percent of white Army soldiers and 38 percent of black soldiers felt segregation should continue and desegregation was an "unachievable goal."¹³ Essentially, the Army believed it was a warfighting organization and not in the business of altering accepted social practices. Therefore, considering that the situation in the Army reflected the will of the people, there was not a need to alter personnel policies. Near the end of the nineteenth century, as Jim Crow laws prevailed and racially motivated violence flourished, many Americans believed that "public policy could not undo what private prejudice had wrought."¹⁴ By the middle of the twentieth century, the Armed Forces had essentially accepted that racial inequality was a social problem and that those problems would carry over to the military if fully integrated. Moreover, society felt public policy and laws could not quell fears and racial tension. During this period, it seems the desire to alter the status quo was lacking, and the majority of Americans needed to hear the messages Dr. King would eventually share, including the notion that any time is the right time to address unjust practices and in spite of the difficulty involved, societies must endeavor to make the right choices.

Policy

The 1948 decision to integrate the armed forces was ultimately a product of years of struggle for change. Several influential leaders and key decisions made along the way

¹¹ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 3.

¹² Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 3.

¹³ Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 73.

¹⁴ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, ix.

helped lead to Truman's landmark policy change.

As the nation responded to World War II through expansion of its defense industry, the African-American community remained excluded from wartime job opportunities. Although employment woes rang loudest, there were many individuals disheartened by restrictions to military service, including exclusion from the United States Army Air Corps. With the war in Europe lingering on and the prospects of American entry, black leaders and organizations began to publicly address "Negro" military service, demanding not only their inclusion, but also fighting for proper training and against confinement to labor roles.¹⁵ Initial attacks against the exclusionary policies included efforts to expand access to training and enlistment in the Air Corps. Although the War Department fought against training "Negro pilots," claiming lack of experience in commercial aviation and lack of aviation interest, White House intervention in 1941 finally broke down this particular barrier.¹⁶

In the early 1940s, the struggle continued for legislative action against racial discrimination and segregation practices in the military. During election years, with the growing importance of the African-American voting bloc, presidential candidates began to promise progress on the issues. As his bid for re-election neared, public criticism of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's lack of progress on civil rights continued. Criticism did not cease even after the White House announced what it viewed as growth in numbers and opportunities, promoting an African-American-US Army Colonel, Benjamin O. Davis to the rank of general, and two African-Americans as advisers in the War Department.¹⁷ President Roosevelt appeared to seek minimal action on the topic, and avoided meaningful changes to policy.

In 1945, the Secretary of War appointed a board, the Gillem Board, to conduct an extensive inquiry into its personnel policy on "Negro service." The Board found the exclusionary practices denied the Army the opportunity for increased effectiveness and suggested drastic changes. Recommendations included: increased peacetime utilization of blacks; utilization of blacks in professional roles; equal treatment of all officers; experimental groupings of "Negro units with white units"; and indoctrination of all

¹⁵ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 28.

¹⁶ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 29.

¹⁷ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 43.

service troops to the need and unreserved acceptance of the policy changes.¹⁸ One of the most interesting aspects of the board's report includes the acknowledgement of the change it represented and their decree that it would take courageous leadership and a dedicated staff to implement such change. Despite efforts to recommend changes based on solid evidence, calls for increased effectiveness, and acknowledgment that the changes were not an assault on individual prejudices, the Gillem Board's recommendations were not carried out and policy changes were eventually aborted.¹⁹ With top military officials, such as General Ira Eaker and General Carl Spaatz, avidly voicing opposition to conducting "social experiments" with the Army, it is not hard to imagine how the Gillem Board's suggestions would fall short of implementation.²⁰

With increasing realization that segregation policies were inefficient, the Air Force sought to rectify the situation, yet acknowledged the implicit restrictions societal norms had instilled on their ability to utilize African-Americans effectively. Prior to breakthrough legislation by the White House, the Air Force commissioned its own inquiry into the impact of segregation. The staff officers who performed the investigation found that the quota system and segregation hindered the Air Force's ability to expand or duplicate capabilities as needed, and thus undermined mobilization potential. The reported findings had the remarkable effect of influencing the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Spaatz, who finally decided it was in the Air Force's interest to "eliminate segregation among its personnel by the unrestricted use of Negro personnel in free competition for any duty within the Air Force for which they may qualify."²¹ However, the Air Force's ability to implement changes remained hindered by resistance from other services. Army Secretary Kenneth Royall for example, complained to Secretary of Defense James Forrestal that the Air Force's new statements suggested that all the services were not abiding by the same personnel policies, and that such action was contradictory to the spirit of service unity. Royall's obstinacy helped delay the Air Force's implementation of its new policy.²² The treatment of African-Americans in the military during the years after World War II ended up revealing a "complex pattern of

¹⁸ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 34.

¹⁹ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 44.

²⁰ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 39.

²¹ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 64.

²² Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 65.

reform and continuity.”²³

The catalyst for change finally came with President Truman’s Executive Order 9981 signed on 26 July 1948. The Executive Order prohibited racial and ethnic discrimination in the military. Calling for “equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin,” the Executive Order was somewhat perplexing as it lacked details and a timeline for compliance.²⁴ However, Truman made it clear that he wanted actual results and appointed a Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in Armed Services, known as the Fahy Committee, to oversee the implementation of desegregation. Although his previously appointed Committee on Civil Rights had recommended proposals for legislative action against discrimination, Truman decided to utilize an Executive Order as the military was one of few organizations in which he could take unilateral action to alter government behavior.²⁵ Presidential intervention altered the course of public debate and ultimately helped racial equality advocates obtain their goal of complete racial integration in the military after years of fits and starts.²⁶ Most importantly, racial segregation was costly in terms of money, space, and time, making desegregation appealing to those seeking military effectiveness and efficiency.²⁷

As the Fahy Committee slowly began to design its program to carry out the Executive Order, the Air Force presented them with a draft of its own plan. With only a few recommendations for changes, the Fahy Committee essentially allowed the Air Force to move forward with its own program outlined in Air Force Letter 35-3.²⁸ According to Alan Gropman, the Fahy Committee’s influence on the Air Force’s implementation of desegregation efforts was minimal in comparison to the other services. The work the Air Force had begun prior to the President’s action and the cooperation of its senior leaders ensured the organization could implement the President’s order in a timely fashion and with a high chance for success. Executive Order 9981 provided much-needed leverage for Air Force officials fighting against internal opposition to formal racial integration.

²³ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 135.

²⁴ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 183.

²⁵ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 167.

²⁶ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 158.

²⁷ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 74.

²⁸ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 84.

The Air Force's progressive plan led to the creation of 1,301 integrated units with only 59 predominantly black units within a six-month period, impressing the Fahy Committee, and President Truman.²⁹ Undoubtedly, the Air Force's actions served as an example for the other services, and according to Air Force Representatives speaking at Fahy Committee meetings their program also served as an example for America.

While Truman's predecessor rejected the idea of desegregation just eight years earlier, Truman's ability to implement the order for desegregation stemmed from increased black activism, shifting public opinion, and a successful wartime record. Ironically, historians hold many different opinions regarding Truman's motives for drastic action against racial discrimination in the armed forces. Some believe Truman lacked personal concern for the plight of African-Americans, especially considering his background as a white man from racially segregated Missouri and his known belief in black inferiority. Although Truman's views reflected the "orthodox social views of the day," he was able to distinguish those views from his thoughts on explicit discrimination and proved sympathetic to hardships faced by African-Americans.³⁰

Society

As previously stated, President Truman benefited from a number of factors that enabled him to make the political gamble of Executive Order 9981. Although he was under extraordinary pressure from African-American advocacy organizations, there was also an increasing interest among whites on the idea of improved race relations. As Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman describe in *Foxholes and Color Lines*, "In the eyes of many influential white Americans, reasons of both morality and practical politics made combating racial prejudice seem as imperative in the unsettled postwar world as it had been during World War II."³¹ In order to understand the interplay between the military, specifically the Air Force, and American society one must understand the social context surrounding the major policy change in 1948, and its impact in later decades.

Prior to discussion of the specific social context around Truman's order, a brief review of the topic of social change is appropriate. In *The Military Factor in Social Change*, Henry Barbera accounts for the rise of political society and begins his discussion

²⁹ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 85.

³⁰ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 160.

³¹ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 171.

with descriptions of social change that are relevant to the current study. Barbera first describes how the best time to gain insight into a person's life is during a time of fundamental crisis when the individual has faced grave decisions.³² At such turning points, individuals are likely to reveal their true beliefs and as Dr. King suggested one finds their true measure by the stances and actions people take during times of challenge and controversy. Barbera believes the same is true for studying collectivities such as American society, for it is "when all hell breaks loose and members do their worst and best that the powerful forces that organize and control human society are revealed."³³ The upheaval beginning in the interwar period, increased during World War II and amplified in the aftermath of the war, stimulated the debate about accepted racial and ethnic discrimination in the military. The manner in which the various facets of society responded revealed much about the character of America. Many social scientists believe the treatment of blacks during World War II served as a turning point as the "Negro was no longer willing to accept discrimination...without protest."³⁴ The full institution of rights and privileges for African-Americans came later through the attainment of collective benefits from the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, the integration of the armed forces signified a major initial step in the transition from accepted racial injustices to formal racial equality for African-Americans.

At the start of World War II, some fundamental changes in opinions had already begun to take place among African-Americans. Specifically, many began to see the popular reaction to the First World War as a mistake. During that time, W.E.B. DuBois had encouraged blacks to forego racial grievances during the war.³⁵ Yet, by America's entry into World War II, blacks sought to connect their racial struggle with the ideology at the center of the war. Controversial periodicals among black subscribers made comparisons between white supremacy and Nazi ideology. Advocates sought to highlight the hypocrisy of fighting a world war for freedom from racial ideology while upholding racial discrimination and segregation at home. African-Americans held hope

³² Henry Barbera, *The Military Factor in Social Change Volume 1: From Provincial to Political Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 3.

³³ Barbera, *The Military Factor in Social Change Volume 1*, 3.

³⁴ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 106.

³⁵ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 111.

that the war now presented them with an opportunity to persuade, embarrass, and compel white-America to act in a more enlightened fashion.

Undoubtedly, the democratic ideology at the core of American efforts in Europe and the Pacific increased the introspective reflections among American society. Many white Americans, like blacks, viewed the idea of fighting Nazi Germany's racist ideology hypocritical, considering America was subscribing to its own caste system.³⁶ Interestingly, simplistic depictions of African-Americans in films, television shows and books combined to present the white public with sympathetic and heroic portrayals of black soldiers, which in turn helped influence educated elites on the moral imperative to dismantle racial prejudice.³⁷ Blacks and whites continued to wrestle with the inherent weaknesses of discrimination in all segments of society, including the armed forces. Many groups of advocates for equality worked together to pressure government action that would ensure equal participation for African-Americans in both the armed forces and defense industries.³⁸ Although President Roosevelt resisted meaningful changes in response to the revolution of sorts taking place, major progress in race relations eventually came about through efforts such as his successor's integration of the armed forces.

Unlike Roosevelt, President Truman was no longer able to sustain the status quo in race relations. After World War II, the African-American voting block generally became a militant and motivated political force seeking support for its efforts to fight segregation in all facets of society.³⁹ The growing realization that the African-American vote was critical for Democrats was only one of the factors influencing Truman's action. Racial tensions in civilian life also began to peak as black veterans returned home with a new level of dissatisfaction based on the hypocrisy they witnessed in the war for democracy. Alternatively, white supremacists fought indignantly against any suggestions of racial integration. Clearly, the status quo was untenable, and instances of racial violence were among the elements persuading Truman to take significant action. Truman's personal beliefs in equal opportunity and legal equality, coupled with growing

³⁶ Robert J. Cottrol, Raymond T. Diamond, and Leland B. Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education: Caste, Culture, and the Constitution* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 2003), 95.

³⁷ Cottrol, Diamond, and Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 96.

³⁸ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 115.

³⁹ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 132.

unrest and demands for change, served as the foundation for his move to influence race relations. The work done by the President's Committee on Civil Rights and the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services helped convince the President, other influential government officials, and the Supreme Court that "separate but equal" was flawed.

Truman established the President's Committee on Civil Rights in 1946 with the aim to investigate increasing violence against African-Americans. Their charge was also to provide the President with suggestions for future action. The 1947 radical document containing their recommendations, *To Secure These Rights*, provided a framework consisting of ideas and a proposed legislative agenda intent on guiding policy related to civil rights. Ultimately, it provided Truman with a comprehensive rationale for the Executive Order to end segregation in the armed forces.⁴⁰ The committee's evidence illuminated the extent of racial and ethnic discrimination and inequities in law enforcement which denied blacks their rights and due liberties. In addition to the other sectors of society covered, the committee's evidence related to the military's racial policies justified the call for urgent use of the federal government's power to address the growing social dilemma.

The President's Committee on Civil Rights viewed the armed forces as an integral part of the larger society, equal to other major institutions. As such, military reforms needed to be included in any overall social change agenda. Interestingly, the fundamental basis of this assertion was the philosophical belief that "all able-bodied citizens must enjoy the right to serve the nation and the cause of freedom in time of war."⁴¹ The committee felt that asking men to fight for freedom while simultaneously humiliating them through discriminatory practices was wrong and weakened national defense. Whether intentional or not, branches of the armed forces that desegregated portions of military activity during World War II out of operational need and sometimes curiosity, had served as sociological laboratories.⁴² The committee argued the armed forces should continue to do so, as the military provided the government with an

⁴⁰ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 163.

⁴¹ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 164.

⁴² Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 165.

opportunity to prove whites and blacks could train, work and fight together in unity.⁴³ The branches of the military would first have to overcome those lingering hurdles so that the committee's plans for legislative action could finally help end discrimination and segregation in the military.

As politics and democratic idealism combined to demand action on civil rights, the problems with segregation in the armed forces grew in priority. As the President's Committee on Civil Rights found, the policies in the Navy and the Army designed to decrease racial discrimination lacked enforcement in the mid-1940s. The Gillem Board's recommendations for incremental steps to improve the plight of African-American soldiers went ignored. According to Dalfiume, the Army failed to implement the board's recommendations due in part to their contradictory nature.⁴⁴ The link between the board's goal of full utilization of black manpower and the current policy of segregation was not clear, enabling the Army to skirt around the real issue. Discrimination continued until the politics surrounding Truman's presidential election forced the topic of racial segregation in the armed forces to the forefront again.

As previously described, one of the reasons the Air Force was able to meet the demands of Truman's order to integrate as promptly as they did was due to the work and research the organization had accomplished prior to 1948. The Air Force took such measures because of a fundamental shift in opinion on segregation. In fact, representatives from the Air Force voiced their discontent with segregation in testimonies given during Fahy Committee hearings. Moreover, the Air Force believed its program for integration would not only serve as a model for the other services, but would be "good for America as well."⁴⁵

The historical record indicates the growing dissatisfaction with segregation throughout society, including the armed forces, in the 1940s. Yet, one must consider that there was also great societal and military resistance to change. President Truman's actions however, would help provide a break through and perhaps speed up the process leading to full equality. Indeed, Truman's orders barring discrimination in both federal civil service and the armed forces would not end racial discrimination completely.

⁴³ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 165.

⁴⁴ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 154.

⁴⁵ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 85.

Racism, discrimination, and Jim Crow laws remained a large part of American society, yet Truman's orders, coupled with the changes in public opinion, set the stage for influential leaders and organizations to address injustices in other social realms. For instance, in the late 1940s Thurgood Marshall and his associates utilized the new sentiments to fight against Jim Crow in education.⁴⁶

Once the Air Force integrated, its success served as an example of the power behind government action in bringing about social change. Despite concerns that integration would lead to a lack of cohesion and increased operational problems, the Air Force actually witnessed a decrease in racial conflict. According to Dalfiume, there is evidence that members of the Supreme Court recognized the Air Force's success and gathered data from Truman's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services as they contemplated decisions leading up to the reversal of "separate but equal."⁴⁷ Additionally, in 1954, as the Supreme Court considered the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, members of the court read *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, a book by Lee Nichols' which provided a full account of military integration. Such evidence suggests that Truman's move to integrate the armed services was a major contributor in the process of formally reversing accepted social prejudices.

During the late 1940s once President Truman called for the end of segregation in the armed forces, the Air Force truly demonstrated leadership. The growing opinion that segregation was immoral and operationally ineffective spurred the organization into making changes that would find much needed support in Truman's Executive Order. While it is evident that public opinion was moving in the direction toward improved race relations, the record supports the idea that Truman's order to integrate the armed forces was an integral part of the process of social change. Robert Cottrol et al, suggest in *Brown v. Board of Education* that whether the laws and policies such as Executive Order 9981 began to reflect the changing national culture or they were in fact, leading the change is a difficult argument to make. However, the more important point is that both were changing and precipitating changes in each other.⁴⁸ In this case, one might conclude the Air Force served as a leader among the other branches of the armed forces,

⁴⁶ Cottrol, Diamond, and Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 99.

⁴⁷ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 4.

⁴⁸ Cottrol, Raymond T. Diamond, and Leland B. Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 100.

while playing an integral part in the larger process of social change.

Military Organization

Although President Truman ordered the desegregation of the military via Executive Order in July of 1948, implementation varied in the different armed services, with the Air Force leading by implementing integration in only ten months.⁴⁹ However, there were doubts about integration from both white and black segments of the Air Force. Such doubts would give way to success and ultimately, the Air Force became a model for workability to the other services and to the larger society.⁵⁰ As previously described, the Air Force was able to comply with the order so swiftly due to the work done in the organization before the President's order and the growing assessment of segregation as inefficient.

The path to integration for the Air Force was by no means smooth and uneventful. Racial tensions peaked in the aftermath of World War II as black soldiers became increasingly frustrated with their treatment and the perceived dichotomy between the United States' espoused values and personnel practices. Just prior to and immediately after the Air Force gained its independence, clashes of opinions resulted in delays to implementing change as the senior leadership desired.

Several black Army Air Forces (AAF) organizations utilized violence and rioting to garner attention for their plight, such as the 1946 MacDill Army Air Field riot.⁵¹ Soldiers were upset about their assigned duties, mostly menial manual labor, and the different discharge processes practiced for whites and blacks. As tensions rose, a fight broke out on the base and continued to escalate into a riot that could not be resolved until the early hours of the next day.⁵² In the aftermath of the riot, investigations into its cause noted conditions on the base but also blamed Communist agitation. According to Gropman, there was a tendency to blame black militancy and demands for integration on Communism, seeing it as the enemy's way to undermine the United States. The investigations led to some improvement in the base facilities and relief of overcrowding,

⁴⁹ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 63.

⁵⁰ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 85.

⁵¹ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 22.

⁵² Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 48.

but tension persisted due in part to a failure to address the underlying causes of the riot. As the Gillem Board worked to carry out its task of preparing a policy on utilization of “negro” manpower to maximize military efficiency, the Board recognized the relationship between discriminatory practices and rioting and suggested that responsibility for the violence lay with Army commanders.⁵³ The Board members understood how segregation itself was essentially sparking racial conflict; therefore, it recommended that leaders foresee sources of friction and address them and demonstrate a desire to care for all troops, to facilitate a decrease in violence. However, the Army implemented very few of the Gillem Board’s recommendations.

In spite of interviewing a multitude of commanders who balked at integration of any sort, the board recommended “an evolutionary program to bring about racial integration.”⁵⁴ Considering the Army would never fully implement the program, one may conclude the recommendations were more in tune with the desires of the individual generals on the Board than a reflection of the military temper. In fact, doubts existed on both sides of the issue as to whether the Air Force should integrate. At the time, many black and white troops thought integration would be harmful, and some felt blacks already received equal treatment and access to opportunities. Paradoxically, as the Air Force moved closer to integration, some black soldiers resisted such efforts fearing loopholes existed which would result in downgrades to their well-paid positions.⁵⁵ Moreover, some institutions continued to warn that forced integration would result in conflict, discontent, and racial cliques that would harm combat effectiveness.⁵⁶ In the mid-1940s, as educators and military leaders began to dispel theories of inherent black inferiority and stereotypes of black incompetency, the lingering justification for segregation rested on the premise that the military was simply reflecting accepted social norms and could not overcome society’s racial beliefs. As public opinion polls revealed, white Americans continued to abhor the idea of close physical or social contact between African-Americans and whites, and Southerners primarily detested the idea of the federal

⁵³ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 33, 45.

⁵⁴ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 41.

⁵⁵ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 86.

⁵⁶ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 176.

government seeking to override local laws in order to promote racial equality.⁵⁷

Undoubtedly, the mission to integrate the Air Force was fraught with resistance from the extremes of both black and white communities.

As the turmoil suggests, in the period before the 1948 Executive Order, calls for racial equality and full implementation of black rights in the armed forces faced doubts and firmly held racial beliefs by blacks and whites alike. The reality of the Air Force's situation, however, was that racial segregation was ineffective and a costly undertaking. Such costs were not limited to dollars, as segregation and quotas often resulted in branches of the armed forces denying themselves access to highly talented and qualified individuals, simultaneously decreasing military performance. As World War II continued, and American involvement deepened, evidence began to mount illustrating how the use of race as the basis for structuring military organizations "undermined efficiency, morale, and legitimacy."⁵⁸

Towards the latter part of World War II and in the postwar timeframe, an acute manpower shortage helped illuminate how black manpower was wasted due to practicing segregation.⁵⁹ Prescribed quotas and the administrative work involved in tracking them proved complex and wasteful. Additionally, while practicing segregation, the military forced itself to build and maintain duplicate infrastructure in order to house, feed, and train black and white soldiers separately. Maintaining duplicate base facilities, regardless of the number of black individuals who would use them, proved costly and inefficient. Indeed, the most obvious example of duplicate efforts includes the AAF's policy on "negro" flying training, which resulted in the establishment of a separate flying school in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1941. Although the War Department initially announced that blacks would fill the administrative positions there, white officers filled them due to the belief that "negroes" lacked the leadership necessary in such an urgent wartime situation, creating more tension and demoralizing effects.⁶⁰ This initial segregated training policy led to overcrowding three years later, which hindered both morale and operational effectiveness.

⁵⁷ Merishon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 178.

⁵⁸ Merishon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 74.

⁵⁹ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 82.

⁶⁰ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 84.

The practice of organizing the armed forces' structures based on race meant that the full use of human talent and potential succumbed to arbitrary quotas and requirements for division. African-American soldiers possessing specialized technical and professional skills found themselves underutilized because of the assignment process.⁶¹ Rather than assigning individuals to units based on needs and the abilities of the individuals, restrictions based on race and quotas drove the armed forces to assign blacks where space was available. The Army Air Force's problem in 1942, when it needed 10,000 meteorologists with only seven vacancies for black meteorologists, provides an example of how limitations hindered effective personnel management and denied the use of a populace. Once blacks filled the seven positions, the Army Air Force rejected other qualified black meteorologists in spite of its own needs.⁶²

As the Air Force began its study into the operational impact of segregation, military practicality combined with the previously described political process to move the Air Force towards racial integration. The Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lt. General Idwal Edwards, initiated the Air Force's inquiry into the impact of segregation on effectiveness and found it was wasteful and inefficient to assign blacks based on the process of quotas.⁶³ Edwards proved influential in the integration process. Additionally, Secretary of Defense Forrestal and Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington advocated for desegregation. Although the Air Force leadership found the policy of segregation ineffective and sought to overturn it, the catalyst for change in an atmosphere of prejudice-based resistance finally only came through President Truman's Executive Order in 1948.

The Air Force's intentions were to implement integration gradually by slowly mixing African-Americans into units with whites. The plan for integration included the abolishment of all racial quotas, implementation of fair assignment policies, and introduction of a standardized process to determine qualification for training and promotion.⁶⁴ With only a few requested changes, the Fahy Committee approved the Air Force's plan. The Air Force began with intense efforts to inform personnel of the

⁶¹ Merishon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 75.

⁶² Merishon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 76.

⁶³ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 64.

⁶⁴ Merishon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 194.

integration policy through briefings and communication from senior leadership. Additionally, with the closure and mixture of segregated units, African-Americans underwent screening through interviews designed to find their talents and best match them to newly desegregated units. Due in part to a close monitoring system, the Air Force implemented its swift desegregation program and by the end of 1950, 95 percent of African-Americans in the Air Force were in integrated units, with full integration in 1952.⁶⁵

Fears about likely discipline problems from integration failed to materialize. The reason for the somewhat smooth transition was due in part to strong Air Force leadership and the concerted effort to inform Air Force personnel of the new policy. Leaders advised Air Force commanders that failure to comply was equivalent to command failure, and that, ultimately, they were responsible for any problems.⁶⁶ Both external pressure from the Fahy Committee and internal pressure from Air Force leadership, including Edwards and Symington, combined to ensure the Air Force process of desegregation would be smooth and effective.

Conclusion

As revealed by a study of the history leading up to President Truman's Executive Order to end segregation in the armed forces, there was increasing awareness among American society and the military that a major problem with existing practices existed. Although opinions differ as to the true motivating factor for Truman's decision, it is clear politics, a growing concern for racial violence, and a desire for greater military effectiveness combined to influence his decision. Considering the President's authority over the military, Truman decided to implement the Executive Order versus depending on legislative action by Congress because of his belief in the potential transformational power of utilizing the military to alter governmental behavior. The successful results attained by the Air Force served as a model for the other services and American society, as evidenced by the Supreme Court's consideration of military integration as it contemplated cases related to "separate but equal." In the process of social change and race relations, the Air Force proved itself a valuable change agent. Although military

⁶⁵ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 197.

⁶⁶ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 195.

necessity proved more of a motivator for change, rather than pure civil rights arguments, the result was racial integration of the military. The Air Force was undeniably a leader for the other branches to follow.

Chapter 3

Women in Combat Roles

And if you chance to feel, that the positions I occupied were rough and unseemly for a woman—I can only reply that they were rough and unseemly for men.

--Clara Barton

America's military history is replete with examples of meaningful contributions from women. Ranging from informal roles during the American Revolution, limited nursing roles during the First World War, to expanded roles in WWII, women have proven their ability to serve in combat conditions. Interestingly, the country has not always acknowledged such contributions as equal in sacrifice or importance as those made by men. Additionally, accepted social norms routinely led to restrictions on the type of military roles considered suitable for women. The desire of many women to fulfill their perceived civic duties has often contradicted society's notion to limit them to traditional family responsibilities. In the age of the modern military however, people have come together to fight for equal opportunities for women seeking to serve their country, moving away from restricting social boundaries. Although a number of barriers to increased opportunities for women in the military no longer exist, the struggle for full integration in combat roles continued until a January 2013 announcement that the Department of Defense planned to remove the final barrier.¹

A number of policies exist throughout history as evidence of the transition of women's roles in the Uniformed Services from informal to formal. As with the racial integration of the armed forces, the integration of women into the male-dominated field found its impetus in the operational needs of the military. Over the course of history, social barriers fell as the demands for manpower and expertise drove the need for progress in the armed forces. Because of the unique mission of each of the services, their responses to policy changes vary and continue to differ today. Currently, the Air Force

¹ Darlene M. Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces: A Guide to the Issues* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), xi.

The author shares Iskra's definition of full integration as the removal of policies forbidding women from serving in any particular roles such as ground combat, and the subsequent acceptance of such roles by military leaders. There is also a need to discuss female registration in the Selective Service as 18-year-old men are required to do.

has an impressive 99 percent of its Active Component positions open to women.² Although a few restrictions remain on combat roles for women in the Air Force, the successful near-full integration serves as a testament to the ability of women to perform equally with their male counterparts. With the DOD's announcement to remove gender-based barriers to service, the Air Force plans to review how best to open the remaining seven officer and enlisted Air Force specialty codes currently closed to women. As important as the entire history of the path toward full integration of women is to the understanding of the military's role as an agent of change, a focus on the Air Force—specifically on combat aviation, illuminates the capability of women to excel under the most demanding conditions. In terms of making strides in affording equal opportunities to women, the Air Force serves as a leader among the branches of the military and as a positive example for greater society.

Many people may not realize it, but women have served voluntarily in each of America's wars throughout the nation's history. Although socially constructed images of women shaped the perception that they were unable to serve in the same capacity as their male counterparts, women worked diligently under harsh conditions to further the American purpose and often lacked the recognition they deserved. In order to understand how the Air Force has served as an effective agent in the process of social change, it is necessary to understand the historical plight of women seeking equal opportunities in the armed forces, and the Air Force in particular.

In the earliest days of American history, women fought besides men in informal ways, including disguising themselves as men in order to participate.³ Women were able to conceal their gender, as complete physicals were not mandatory until the First World War. As families struggled with the reality of sending their men off to battle, wives, mothers, lovers, and daughters were among the women who took to the road as well, following behind the soldiers and performing logistical duties.⁴ Known as camp followers, the female supporters helped fulfill necessary but less glorious roles such as “laundry, cooking, nursing the sick and wounded, burying the dead, and so forth, so the

² Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, “Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces” (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012), 6.

³ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 2.

⁴ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 3.

men could concentrate on fighting.”⁵ Moreover, during the American Revolution, women left behind at the home front rose to the occasion and fought for their own self-defense against both the Indians and the British loyalists. Other informal roles include the long-standing tradition of women in nursing. As Darlene Iskra describes in *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, nursing was a natural fit for women seen primarily as caregivers. It was a critical role yet one that often went without the benefits or recognition of formal military positions.

The increasing participation of women in American military efforts illuminated the inequalities between women and men, as women lacked formal rank and status.⁶ During the First World War, approximately 33,000 women served, with 20,000 of them participating in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps—separated from the regular Army and Navy branches, and hence serving without full benefits.⁷ The growing disparity between the treatment of women compared to their male counterparts was troubling, yet the proposed solution of making nurses equal in rank to male soldiers was deemed unacceptable to military leaders. Ultimately, the compromise was to award “relative rank,” which helped provide a hierarchical organizational structure but would not serve as a true solution to the plight of the female nurses.⁸

Throughout World War II, women served in a growing number of roles, which left the services with the impression of the need for change. However, it was not until the passage of the 1947 Army-Navy Nurse Act, when female nurses became a permanent part of the military with rank, status, and privileges, and the subsequent Women’s Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948, that the formal role of women in the military began.

During World War II, a large debate stemmed from the question of whether or not women should serve in temporary or permanent roles, even as the country needed more manpower. With increased American mobilization, the creation of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) allowed women to fill important noncombat positions. Although over

⁵ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 3.

⁶ Erin Solaro, *Women in the Line of Fire: What you Should Know About Women in the Military* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006), 10.

⁷ Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women: Effects Upon Readiness, Cohesion, and Morale* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), 1.

⁸ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 4.

350,000 women had served in the war and assisted American efforts in a respectable fashion, their support was temporary and their future role was uncertain.⁹ As people began to realize women might serve in both peacetime and wartime to enhance America's military mission, resisters to change argued that "women would not be able to accept military discipline and that inducting women would masculinize them and damage American culture."¹⁰ The debate also grew to include discrediting rumors of loose morals and arguments over terms for conscription of women. The resisters continued to argue for the status quo, even as women demonstrated their capacity to operate trucks, dig ditches, fly aircraft and instruct men to do the same.¹¹ Although women worked to assist operations near the front lines in both theaters of operations, they remained formally excluded from direct combat in any of the domains—ground, air, land or sea.

In spite of a formal exclusion however, women also have experienced the consequences of war such as death and injury. As suggested in the quote at the start of this chapter by Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, the experience of war was violent for all soldiers regardless of gender. Yet, socially accepted norms drove exclusionary policies, and, although women were serving during a time of the nation's need, they went without the proper pay, privileges and benefits warranted by their sacrifices. For example, in WWII, women serving as members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) flew over 60 million miles in all weather during the war, with 38 of them dying on duty, yet leaving service without any benefits since the WASPs were not militarized at the time.¹²

Through World War II, women faced a number of barriers to acknowledgement of their sacrifices in military service. In spite of the fact that they were at risk in combat, contributing much and becoming indispensable to America's war efforts, commonly accepted beliefs regarding the appropriate role of women justified the limitations placed on their formal roles.

Although Congress had passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in

⁹ Harrell and Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women*, 1.

¹⁰ Lorry M. Fenner, "Either You Need These Women or You Do Not: Informing the Debate on Military Service and Citizenship," in *Women in the Military* edited by Rita J. Simon (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 7.

¹¹ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 6.

¹² Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 16.

1948, the same year that President Truman called for racial integration in the military, the legislation contained a number of constraints on the roles and numbers of women in the military branches. With quotas, restrictions on leadership roles, and exclusion from specific combat missions, the legislation was both a bridge and a barrier to greater opportunity. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the number of women in the military increased as the need for support arose once the military transitioned from a conscript to all volunteer force.¹³ Despite the increased number of women, the military failed to address the issues inherent in this demographic change, such as sexual harassment and rape. Nor did it adjust the combat exclusion policies. In the 1980s and early 1990s however, the direction of policy would finally change, as there was a growing recognition among society and military leaders that women were capable of increased responsibilities and roles.

Although policy changes resulted in a number of opportunities opening up to women, the debate about the proper role of women in combat continues today, even as the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced plans to begin removing the remaining barriers. Are the remaining barriers to full integration of women in combat roles justified? Are the reasons against integration similar to the initial arguments against their formal entry into the armed forces? In order to answer such questions, a careful study of the details regarding significant policy changes is necessary. Exploration of the changes made leading to the current state of gender integration, illustrates how the United States has used the Air Force as an effective agent in the process of social change.

Policy

Much like the African-American military experience, upon returning from World War II women found a society that was thankful for their wartime contributions but ready to return to the same pre-war way of doing things. Although women had served in a number of roles, their service was temporary and upon conclusion of the war, most of society expected them to return to their homemaker duties. Although 1943 legislation led to full military status of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), the law was set to expire on

¹³ Solaro, *Women in the Line of Fire*, 13.

June 30, 1948.¹⁴ Military leaders including General Dwight D. Eisenhower believed there was a place for women to serve permanently in the armed forces.¹⁵ Additionally, Congress began to see the benefits of retaining women in specific peacetime roles in order to aid future mobilization efforts. Congress, led by Senator Margaret Chase Smith from Maine, passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, opening the doors for women to serve formally. President Truman signed the law into effect on June 12, 1948. As important as the first step towards full integration of women into the military was, the legislation was excessively restrictive and allowed for further perpetuation of socially constructed beliefs regarding women and their capacity to serve in combat. Although the law now allowed women to serve in the regular armed forces permanently, there were a number of conditions:

- Women could make up no more than two percent of the total enlisted force.
- The proportion of female officers could equal no more than 10 percent of the number of enlisted women.
- Women could not serve in positions of command over men.
- No woman could attain the rank of general, and promotions to rank above lieutenant colonel were only temporary.
- Women did not receive the traditional spousal benefits unless their husband depended on them for over 50 percent of their support.
- Women were specifically prohibited from being assigned to duty on Navy vessels (aside from hospital ships and some transports), or combat aircraft engaged in combat missions.
- Although the restrictions regarding combat vessel and aircraft assignments did not apply directly to the Army, the Army developed exclusionary policies of their own regarding direct combat based upon the intent of the Navy and Air Force statutes.¹⁶

As indicated by the restrictions included in the Women's Armed Services

¹⁴ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 151.

¹⁵ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 7.

¹⁶ Harrell and Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women*, 2.

Women's Research and Education Institute, "Chronology of Significant Legal and Policy Changes Affecting Women in the Military: 1947-2003" (retrieved from <http://www.wrei.org>, 20 January 2013).

Integration Act, the government acknowledged there was a permanent role for women in the military but it was definitely not one equal to that of men. The higher, and often double, standards placed on women found their genesis in the long-held beliefs of American society, not empirical data. For example, the only justification offered for the rules stating women could not enlist under the age of 21 without written consent of her parents and for limitations on recruiting numbers, was that the military hoped to “maintain the prestige of the program in the eyes of the public and ensure acceptance of the women by men.”¹⁷ The Defense Department further regulated women in service by forcing female troops who became pregnant to get out of the military. Additionally, if the pregnant woman was unmarried, she received a punitive discharge and little support, if any, for her prenatal care.¹⁸ Interestingly, no disciplinary action was launched against the military father who impregnated her. In addition to a discharge for pregnancy, women were also subject to discharge for marrying or getting an abortion.¹⁹ The restrictions contained within the policy were lasting but would not last forever, as changes led to the removal of the barriers to service in combat aviation and combat vessels in the 1990s and ultimately the projected removal of all combat exclusions was announced in January 2013.

Although not perfect, the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act was a necessary first step in garnering the pay, privileges, and permanent status that hard-working military women desired. Understanding such laws and their premise, causes pause today, as the question of the proper role of women in combat remains a topic of debate. If women have proven their ability to serve in the modern military whether married, single, pregnant, or mothers, the discussion of other holdover exclusions is a worthy topic of exploration. With the recent announcement from the Defense Department regarding the intention to remove the remaining barrier to women serving in direct combat, the biggest concern is the fact that each service will be able to determine how the new policy affects them and how it will implement the change.

In 1967, Public Law 90-130 removed the percentage restrictions on the number of women allowed in the military and for particular ranks initiated in the 1948 legislation.

¹⁷ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 7.

¹⁸ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 8.

¹⁹ Solaro, *Women in the Line of Fire*, 11.

Women were now able to hold permanent rank at the higher officer levels and could become admirals or generals.²⁰ Other advances made in the early 1970s included the opening of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, service academies, and noncombatant ships to Navy women.²¹ Despite a growing number of opportunities for patriotic women seeking to fulfill their perceived civic duty, the exclusion from combat remained. Although there were historic contributions to aviation made by women since the 1930s, and even as flying opportunities became accessible to women in the Air Force and the Navy, legislation restricting combat aviation continued to restrain their full integration.

The removal of combat exclusion laws in the military was not a foregone conclusion. As military women integrated further into Navy, Army and Air Force life, there was a growing consensus that legal prohibition against their combat service was unconstitutional. In the late 1970s, women began filing lawsuits in federal court claiming the combat exclusion in Section 6015 of U.S. Code Title 10 was unconstitutional.²² The judge ruling in a class-action suit filed by six women against the Navy found that the prohibition was in fact unconstitutional, stating that the Fifth Amendment provided for equal protection of men and women against gender discrimination. Laws favoring members of one gender and disadvantaging members of the other should reasonably relate to the achievement of an important objective and not solely based on the gender of the member.²³ With the judge's decision, the Navy now had a mandate to open up opportunities at sea for women, and the precedent for removing the combat exclusion law was set. The exclusionary law had prohibited women's performance in combat, but, in reality, women were already serving in combat conditions. For example, during the 1983 invasion of Grenada, female C-141 pilots departed in their aircraft to participate in the mission, and then after takeoff received notification they had waivers to fly combat missions.²⁴ Essentially, they were capable of serving in combat conditions when necessary, even without ever receiving the proper combat training and preparation, and surely not the recognition. Women deserving combat medals were also victim to the combat exclusion laws in the 1990s during Operations Desert Shield and Storm, as the

²⁰ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 151.

²¹ Harrell and Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women*, 2.

²² Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 12.

²³ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 12.

²⁴ Fenner, "Either You Need These Women or You Do Not," 16.

fact that they were not serving in formal combat positions kept them from officially receiving recognition. Clearly, the rhetoric and reality did not match one another and action was necessary.

Although the judge in the class-action lawsuit helped provide the impetus to change, the laws remained in place. A Democratic Congresswoman from Colorado, Patricia Schroeder, proposed an amendment to the 1992 Defense Authorization Act that would finally repeal the no-combat flying statute.²⁵ The initial amendment was limited to the Air Force but grew to include aviation in the Navy and Marine Corps. Once the House of Representatives passed the repeal of the combat flying exclusions, Senators Sam Nunn, John Warner and John McCain among others, insisted on the formation of a commission to study the legal, military and societal implications of removing the exclusions as proposed by Senators Edward Kennedy and William Roth.²⁶ The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces reviewed several issues related to the assignment of servicewomen including: quotas, voluntary versus involuntary duty, fitness standards, combat aviation and other combat roles. After eight months of consideration, survey, research and consultation with experts, the Commission found the “American experience does not preclude assigning capable women to direct combat positions for which they are qualified.”²⁷ However, the Commission recommended the re-enactment of the provisions of Title 10, U.S. code section 6015—the exclusion of women from flying combat aircraft.²⁸ While acknowledging that women were capable of flying combat aircraft as well as their male counterparts, the Commission’s primary concerns were unit cohesion and the possibility of women becoming Prisoners of War.

Interestingly, the Commission’s final report was not available until November, after President Bush lost the 1992 election to Governor William J. Clinton. Consequently, the Commission’s recommendations went ignored.²⁹ The 1992-1993

²⁵ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 27.

²⁶ The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, *Report to the President, Women in Combat* (McLean, VA: Brassey’s, 1993), iii.

²⁷ The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, *Report to the President, Women in Combat*, 22.

²⁸ The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, *Report to the President, Women in Combat*, 28.

²⁹ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 29.

Defense Authorization Bill finally removed barriers to combat aviation. Later, the Department of Defense Appropriation Authorization Act of 1994 removed barriers to service on combat ships. These advances occurred despite strong resistance and lobbying efforts from individuals opposed to the proposed changes. However, as the facts became clear about the impressive contributions of women and the reality that women were serving in combat roles without the rights and privileges they deserved, the momentum of those legislators proposing change was unstoppable.

On April 28, 2003, General Merrill McPeak, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, announced that in accordance with Secretary of Defense Leslie Aspin's direction, "women pilots and navigators will be able to compete for, train for and fly any aircraft in the inventory of the United States Air Force."³⁰ The Air Force promptly began its transition to gender-neutral aviation policies and identified a number of women to participate in flying training normally prohibited. The only remaining restrictions for women in the Air Force were close combat units such as Pararescue and Combat Controller.

Secretary Aspin stated the essence of the new policy was that "military services are to open up more specialties and assignments to women."³¹ All services were now required to allow women to compete for combat aircraft assignments. According to Aspin, the changes would enable the military to build a larger pool of talent and resources necessary to perform the military's mission in a post-Cold War reality. As the military forces were drawing down in overall size, it became critical that the services be able to draw from the most qualified individuals and the combat exclusion rules had often forced the military to overlook the highly qualified candidates just because they were females.

Although President William J. Clinton supported the idea of allowing women to serve in combat, he appeared to skirt the issue during his presidential campaign. According to a Washington Times article written in 1993, candidate Clinton often told reporters he would await the findings of a presidential commission before asserting his

³⁰ Merrill McPeak, *Pentagon Operations Directive: Removal of Combat Aviation Exclusion* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, April 1993), 1.

³¹ Leslie Aspin, News Conference on the Expanded Role of Women in Combat, *The Washington Post*, 29 April, 1993.

opinion.³² The evidence in terms of removing the exclusion to combat aviation and combat vessels for women, indicates the Congressional and Defense Department leadership were the most adamant about implementing the change.

Society

The issue of women soldiers serving on the front lines of battle is controversial for a host of reasons, but primarily because of socially constructed images and expectations. Many people view women solely as nurturers, family caregivers, and sensitive beings in need of protection. As such, the idea of deliberately exposing them to danger in military roles is not easy to digest. For decades, the perception that the military is a man's world persisted, and the idea of sending mothers, daughters, sisters, and lovers off to participate in a harsh, dangerous environment was socially unacceptable.³³ For many people, men and women alike, the proper role for women was to birth the boys who would eventually go off to war and maintain the home until the soldiers returned. However, history shows that women have participated in the American military experience since the beginning of America's own struggle for freedom. Although not always serving in formal roles, women experienced exposure to the same harsh physical and environmental conditions as men. Over time, people have fought against the restrictions placed on women's roles in the military, which were often unfair and seemingly unrelated to the professed justification for blocking women from full integration. Unlike racial integration, the full integration of women in the military is an ongoing case with a timeline of advances stretching from the 1940s to current debates on the remaining barriers. At times, the Air Force was a leader in providing new opportunities for women, while in other instances the Air Force had to be encouraged by external pressure.

According to Kristal Alfonso in *Femme Fatale*, the expectations for the role of women in society have had the same devaluing effect in both Western and Eastern cultures.³⁴ Even as women have contributed to the conduct of war since the American

³² "Always Wanted Women," *Washington Times*, 3 May 1993, 6.

³³ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 2.

³⁴ Kristal L.M. Alfonso, *Femme Fatale: An Examination of the Role of Women in Combat and the Policy Implications for Future American Military Operations* (Montgomery, AL: Air University Press, 2009), 7.

Revolution, the expectation that the proper way to fight is with men at the front and women safe at home has continuously diminished their contributions. Throughout history, social expectations shape the stories told of heroism and wartime experiences, often describing a heroic male soldier braving the battle, suffering hardship, and enduring in order to return to the loving embrace of his wife or lover.³⁵ The socially digestible stories rarely include the description of a female soldier at the front fighting for her own life as she cared for the male soldiers, dressed up as one of them, or ferried the aircraft to the men who would fly them into battle. In many cultures, the accepted role women should play in society has often resulted in a false perception of actual events where women were involved in combat. Consider the female fighters from Russia who fought in World War II against the Nazis but agreed “women do not belong in combat,” and the only reason why they took up arms against the Nazis was that “Russia faced certain destruction.”³⁶ Historians and the participants themselves often dismiss the sacrifices of these women as they defer to societal expectations. Ignorance of the actual history of contributions of women to war enables perpetuation of a socially constructed limiting role for women. Moreover, through denying women the right to participate formally in the military and later to fight in combat, one can dismiss women’s contributions as temporary, insignificant and unequal to the sacrifices made by men.

During World War II, American society witnessed the efforts of women who flocked to the factories to fulfill meaningful and necessary jobs. Society considered this a noble deed as it allowed men to leave such jobs and join the battles in the European and Pacific theaters. Additionally, women willingly supported wartime effort through temporary, noncombat roles such as nursing, clerking, and flying airplanes outside of direct combat. The increased participation of women in such military roles was largely acceptable, because it was temporary and many believed once the crisis was over, women would return to their pre-war duties as things went back to the way they were.³⁷ Astonishingly, a media campaign ensued to persuade the public that women war workers were willingly returning to their rightful duties as “homemakers, nurses, clerical workers, or teachers,” returning to their lower paying women’s work as men returned from the

³⁵ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 2.

³⁶ Alfonso, *Femme Fatale*, 8.

³⁷ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 7.

war.³⁸ Consequently, this forced regression served as fuel for action as women sought change.

The growing realization that retaining women increased military effectiveness helped garner support of senior leaders in the military and members in Congress, resulting in the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. Once again, the needs of the military were able to override the social norms of the time.³⁹ However, the social norms retained a powerful hold on decision-makers as the legislation included a number of restrictions on the type of work women could participate in, as previously described. Ultimately, the country needed the contributions of women and they had demonstrated their ability to work courageously alongside men, and proved themselves as acceptable members of the regular military ranks. However, provisions on the roles and opportunities women could fulfill perpetuated the perception that women needed protection in a different manner than men.

As Brigadier General (ret) Rhonda Cornum (Prisoner of War during Operation Desert Storm) attests, "we have to remember that the majority of adults, including those who are in decision-making and powerful positions, look at their childhoods and at their own life experiences" when they form their expectations for women.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, as men in power entertain the idea of women breaking new grounds, they compare those ideas with what they recall their mothers, aunts, sisters and other prominent women in their lives doing. Additionally, when considering the idea of women suffering abuse, hurt or even death in a combat zone, they think of the women in their lives in those situations and reasonably seek to avoid it. As powerful as those images may be, they are just that—images. If it is truly the emotions involved that justify denying combat opportunities to women, then American society needs to address them, but disguising the society's emotional problems with rhetoric regarding a woman's physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities is neither honest nor fair.

In the 1960s and 1970s, greater changes began to take place as the needs of the military drove increased recruiting of young women. Recruiters began to use the

³⁸ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 7.

³⁹ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 7.

⁴⁰ Rhonda Cornum, "Soldiering: The Enemy Doesn't Care if You're Female," in *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military*, ed. Judith Hicks Stiehm (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), 22.

women's movement rhetoric regarding equal pay, opportunities, and advancement to appeal to women as the number of eligible men and exceptionally qualified men went down.⁴¹ The drive for highly qualified women meant that restrictive personnel policies would need alteration. With pressure from within and from external sources, prohibitions on women's service began to change. In 1967, Congress removed percentage restrictions and constraints on women's ranks. In 1976, the Federal Service Academies opened enrollment to women. In 1977, the WASP and American Merchant Marine in Oceangoing Service of WWII organizations gained veteran's status.⁴² Such changes now forced the military to acknowledge that it had used women in many of the roles denied by law before, and as such were now held accountable for providing equitable training, resources, and support.

In the ongoing battle for full integration of women in the military, a final hurdle resides in the idea of women serving in combat. In the Air Force, very few restrictions on women's occupational choices remain, as the 1992-1993 Defense Authorization Bill removed the barriers to combat aviation and other key roles. Women attained this milestone thanks to those who fought hard against resistance in the halls of Congress, in the streets of America and on the airwaves, as those seeking to preserve the nineteenth century picture of the American woman slowly began to lose support. As Representative Schroeder declared during her testimony before the Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee of the House of Representatives in 1992, there was a growing trend in the military to suggest instances of sexual assault and rape were proof that men could not work with women without resorting to assault and the best solution was to eliminate the problem—women.⁴³

One of the main issues in societal expectations for women is the differing views on equality in American culture. According to Darlene Iskra in *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, there are two opposite camps of the debate: egalitarian feminists and antifeminists.⁴⁴ Whereas egalitarian feminists believe in the inherent equality among

⁴¹ Fenner, "Either You Need These Women or You Do Not", 13.

⁴² Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 151.

⁴³ House, *Gender Discrimination in the Military: Hearings before the Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee and the Defense Policy Panel of the Committee on Armed Services*, 102d Cong., 2d sess., 29-30 July 1992.

⁴⁴ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 59.

individuals, regardless of gender, antifeminists view women as different from men and believe in the traditional family structure. Many view the debate over women and full integration in the military as a question of equal citizenship participation.⁴⁵ Considering the arguments against women serving in combat “are not about women’s capabilities to serve, fight, or kill the enemy but on their traditional gendered roles, usually couched in terms of military effectiveness,” those seeking equal rights for all citizens have reason to continue fighting.⁴⁶

Military Organization

With the 1993 announcement of the removal of the combat aviation exclusion, General McPeak spoke to the Air Force’s compliance with the new directive and utilized the opportunity to share the numerous opportunities afforded to women by the Air Force. Interestingly, prior to the Secretary of Defense’s final decision, McPeak had spoken out against such a change. As a professional Airman, once the Secretary gave his direction, the Air Force Chief of Staff declared it was his job to implement the decision as well as he could and he worked to ensure immediate compliance.⁴⁷ The Air Force immediately announced the names of women who would attend training for the new aviation opportunities and demonstrated an eagerness to comply.

When McPeak announced the Air Force’s plan to implement the reversal of combat aviation exclusion, he reiterated the numerous contributions women had made to the Air Force and the leadership exemplified by the Air Force’s progress in gender integration. At the time, there were over 67,000 women in the Air Force constituting 15 percent of the Active Duty force—a higher percentage than any of the other military branches.⁴⁸ This fact serves as an example of the Air Force’s history of leading the way in terms of positions available to women. Women first had the opportunity to attend pilot training in 1976, and navigator training in 1978 and by the 1993 announcement of the removal of the barrier to combat aviation, 629 women had graduated as pilots and 220 as navigators.⁴⁹ Additionally, the Air Force was promoting women in aviation career fields

⁴⁵ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 59.

⁴⁶ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 59.

⁴⁷ Merrill McPeak, News Conference on The Expanded Role of Women in Combat. *The Washington Post*, 29 April, 1993.

⁴⁸ Merrill McPeak, *Pentagon Operations Directive: Removal of Combat Aviation Exclusion*, 1.

⁴⁹ McPeak, *Pentagon Operations Directive: Removal of Combat Aviation Exclusion*, 1.

as well as others at impressive rates including the promotion of Jeanne M. Holm. Holm was the first female brigadier general in the Air Force and the first female major general in any branch of the military. Prior to removal of the combat aviation exclusion, the Air Force was already leading the way for the other services with 97 percent of positions open to women.⁵⁰

As General McPeak declared, the Air Force remained committed to the maintenance of its reputation for recognizing talent and ability over other considerations, such as gender, and in 1993 directed the Air Force to do the following:

1. Immediately transition to gender-neutral pilot training.
2. Institute a gender-neutral assignment system immediately, to include combat aircraft.
3. Screen all female pilots trained since the merit assignment system was established in 1990 to afford them the same assignment opportunity to fighters and bombers that their male counterparts enjoyed at the time of graduation.
4. Screen all female flying instructors to determine those who have been top performers in training command. Target this group for assignment to fighters and bombers, using the same procedures employed for similarly qualified male instructor pilots.⁵¹

The Air Force had willingly led the way in providing more opportunities to women, in terms of specific occupations and promotion even before the Defense Secretary's new direction. The remaining three percent of officer skills that were not open to women were mostly in or related to combat aircraft such as bombers, fighters, and special operations airframes. After the policy change, 99.7 percent of Air Force positions were open to women. The following table lists the newly opened occupations in the Air Force and highlights the opportunities made available by 1998 to female officers:

⁵⁰ Margaret Harrell, Megan Beckett, Chiaying Chien and Jerry Sollinger, *The Status of Gender Integration in the Military: Analysis of Selected Occupations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 5.

⁵¹ McPeak, *Pentagon Operations Directive: Removal of Combat Aviation Exclusion*, 2.

Table 1: Newly Opened Occupations to Air Force Female Officers in 1998

Specialty Code	Description
11BXA	Bomber Pilot, B-1
11BXC	Bomber Pilot, B-52
11FXB	Fighter Pilot, A-10
11FXF	Fighter Pilot, F-15
11FXG	Fighter Pilot, F-15E
11FXH	Fighter Pilot, F-16
11SXC	Special Operations Pilot, AC-130H
11SXF	Special Operations Pilot, MC-130E
11SXG	Special Operations Pilot, MC-130H
12BXA	Bomber Navigator, B-1 Defensive Systems Officer Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO)
12BXB	Bomber Navigator, Offensive Systems Officer
12BXC	Bomber Navigator, B-1 Weapons Systems Officer (WSO)
12FXF	Fighter Navigator, F-15E WSO
12FXG	Fighter Navigator, F-15 EWO
12SXH	Special Operations Navigator, MC-130E EWO
12SXJ	Special Operations Navigator, MC-130E
12SXX	Special Operations Navigator, MC-130H EWO
12SXL	Special Operations Navigator, MC-130H

Source: RAND study, *The Status of Gender Integration in the Military: Analysis of Selected Occupations*, 19.

In the immediate aftermath of the policy change, McPeak announced that seven women were identified for fighter and bomber pilot training, including: Captain Martha McSally, Captain Sharon Preszler, Capt. Dawn Dunlop, First Lieutenant Sara Beyer, First Lieutenant Ellen McKinnon, First Lieutenant Dawn Shohfi, and Second Lieutenant

Jeannie Flynn (later Leavitt).⁵² Leavitt became the first woman to enter fighter lead-in training and went on to fly the F-15E, later becoming the first female fighter pilot to graduate from the USAF Weapons School.⁵³ Remarkably, in 2012, Colonel Leavitt became the first woman to command an Air Force combat fighter wing when she took command of the 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in North Carolina.⁵⁴ Her exemplary performance as a fighter pilot, experience in four different combat operations, and current performance as a fighter wing commander would not have been possible without the Air Force's willful compliance with the decision to remove the exclusion of women to combat aviation.

The removal of the combat aviation exclusion opened up almost all Air Force occupations to women with the remaining exclusions affecting the pararescue and combat controller career fields. Such barriers remained as the Department of Defense policy, directed by Aspin in 1994, prohibited "women from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground."⁵⁵ However, as the 2012 Report to Congress regarding women in combat declared, the modern battlespace does not include a traditional "front line" and women are often exposed to combat conditions regardless of their "assignment" to a combat unit or not. The report considered the reality of modern warfare and notified Congress of some exceptions made to the 1994 policy, in the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy at the battalion level in certain occupational specialties already open to women at higher levels.⁵⁶ The review board described how allowing women to serve in such experiences would provide useful information in the assessment of further gender integration. In the case of gender integration, the type of occupations and nature of each of the branches of the military are extremely relevant issues of concern. Whereas racial integration was suitable for any career field, deeply rooted concerns regarding the capabilities and proper

⁵² Sarah Hood, "Women Fighter Pilots," *Air Force News Service*, 29 April 1993.

⁵³ The University of Texas at Austin, "Aerospace Engineering and Engineering Mechanics Alumni Profiles," <http://www.ae.utexas.edu/alumni-friends/profiles/247-leavitt-profile> (accessed 24 January 2013).

⁵⁴ Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, "Air Force Official Biography: Jeannie Leavitt," <http://www.seymourjohnson.af.mil/library/biographies> (accessed 24 January 2013).

⁵⁵ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, *Report to the Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012), i.

⁵⁶ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, *Report to the Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces*, i.

role for women, as well as physical limitations, hinder the process of full integration of women.

Advocates for increased participation of women usually base their argument on the idea of equal citizenship. Arguments against full integration of women into the military often center on the idea of military effectiveness. Unfortunately, in the debates over women's military roles, people pit arguments for democratic values of equality against arguments of military necessity and readiness, as if "accepting one involves denying the competing claims of the other."⁵⁷ While the two sets of values are not incompatible, the tension between the two sides of the argument has often come to the forefront as leaders review policy and contemplate making changes that would result in increased opportunities for women. Those advancing the military effectiveness argument often point to the physical demands of military positions, particularly those closer to combat action. Opponents of women in combat roles cite biological differences and the comparatively lower female upper-body strength. Obviously, there are inherent physical differences in women and corresponding physical limitations for many women in the Air Force. However, as women have shown in combat aviation, they are equally capable of meeting the physical requirements for flying an aircraft. Before the combat aviation exclusion was lifted, they were not even given the opportunity to demonstrate such ability. Perhaps now that the Secretary of Defense has announced the plan to remove the ground combat exclusion altogether, women will have the opportunity to demonstrate they have the ability to meet the same physical, cognitive and emotional abilities of men serving deep in the battle.

Despite differences of opinion after the 1993 policy change, the Air Force has proven to be a leader among the services in its work to provide opportunities for female Airmen and with the 2013 policy change, will undoubtedly serve as a leader in implementing the policy change in a respectable fashion. Much like the case of racial integration, concerns voiced prior to the integration of women into combat aviation did not come to fruition as women began flying in combat. In fact, Air Force women have proven themselves capable in a number of instances.

⁵⁷ Helena Carreiras, *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 87.

The progress made by the Air Force after the 1993 policy change is evident in the analyses accomplished by organizations such as RAND and the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). Since its establishment by Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall in 1951, DACOWITS has worked to provide decision-makers with advice and recommendations on “matters and policies relating to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in the Armed Forces.”⁵⁸ As early as 1996, the increasing numbers of women in combat aviation (fighter, bombers and special operations fixed wing aircraft) were proof that the Air Force had made progress in increasing opportunities for women. In response to a DACOWITS request for information, the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force announced an expected increase in the number of female combat aviators for the following reasons: decreasing pilot training attrition; substantial increase in female rated officer retention; increased percentage of women in pilot training; and an increase in overall combat aircraft opportunities.⁵⁹ As the numbers indicated, female combat aviators were progressing and demonstrating they could compete with their male counterparts.

In a 2002 close examination of female F-16 pilots in the Air Force, RAND found that once women completed training and joined F-16 units, there were no quantifiable reasons to expect that women would not succeed at the same degree as their male counterparts.⁶⁰ The researchers found the main area of concern was the low number of women seeking to become F-16 pilots, and they suggested further research into understanding the role of individual preference among other factors. Ultimately, gender integration in combat aviation has had a relatively small effect on the main areas of concern: military readiness, unit cohesion and morale.⁶¹ Despite RAND’s finding that conflict in their units studied often arose around personnel impacted by pregnancy, the overall finding was that gender integration actually had a positive effect on cohesion and raised the level of professionalism in the unit.

⁵⁸ Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, *DACOWITS 2009 Report* (Washington, DC: DoD, 2010), i.

⁵⁹ Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Force Management and Personnel), to Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy), memorandum, 20 March 1996.

⁶⁰ Harrell, Beckett, Chien and Sollinger, *The Status of Gender Integration in the Military*, 98.

⁶¹ Harrell and Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women*, 99.

Understandably, personnel in flying units perceive women as having differences in their availability and physical capacity, yet over time, experience actually working with women would provide evidence of their abilities and allow men to judge based off of experience versus images. Often, actual experience with women in a stressful, perhaps dangerous situation has the ability to alter opinions of men who realize women have the capacity to be brave and strong leaders. Consider General Cornum's experience when the Blackhawk Helicopter she was in crashed and she became a Prisoner of War in 1991 during the Gulf War. During her captivity, fellow American Sergeant Troy Dunlap joined her, and acknowledged his surprise that she was so brave. Upon their return to the United States, a reporter asked Dunlap about his thoughts on women in combat to which he responded "I don't think they should be there," however, he added he would "go anywhere with Major Cornum."⁶² As this particular example illustrates, perceptions are strong, yet actual experience can be even stronger.

Soon, more individuals will have the opportunity to gain actual experience flying and fighting with women, as Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, announced in January 2013 the rescission of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule for women. With this announcement, the DOD indicated its intention to remove gender-based barriers to service. For the Air Force, immediate plans include collaborating with U.S. Special Operations Command and other branches of the military to review opening the 3,235 positions currently closed to women, in a "deliberate, measured, and responsible way."⁶³ The seven specialty codes at issue include the following: Combat Control Officer, Combat Rescue/Special Tactics Officer, Special Operations Weather Officer, Enlisted Combat Controller, Enlisted Tactical Air Command Control, Enlisted Pararescue, and Enlisted Special Operations Weather. The DOD is intent on opening the remaining combat positions to women utilizing a purposeful and principled approach, and the Air Force will likely abide by the Secretary of Defense's direction to complete the process by January 1, 2016. Considering the Air Force's prompt compliance with the removal of the combat aviation exclusion, and an admirable appreciation for the contributions of

⁶² Cornum, "Soldiering: The Enemy Doesn't Care if You're Female," 22.

⁶³ Air Force News Service, "AF to open remaining combat positions to women," *Air Force News Service*, 24 January 2013, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123333783> (accessed 28 January 2013), 1.

women, one can logically assume the Air Force will conduct the necessary research regarding physical and mental performance standards and comply with the intent of the new policy in a timely fashion.

Conclusion

In the case of integrating women into combat roles, a unique societal factor distinguishes such integration from that of racial or sexual orientation. Americans have traditionally barred women from performing the most difficult of combat tasks in the military because of a fundamental belief that they are the physically and emotionally weaker of the sexes and should limit their work to the home environment. However, while society has publically declared that women should be exempt from serving in a number of combat roles, the reality is that women have been serving in combat conditions alongside men in conflicts stemming back to the American Revolution. While the social norms limited the positions women could openly hold, their contributions throughout American history illustrate the hypocrisy of the barrier, as women have often performed the duties they were technically banned from, but were not always acknowledged or rewarded for their performance.

As in the case of racial integration, people have come together in the name of equality to fight for recognition of contributions made by women and for the removal of the remaining barriers to complete gender integration. The DOD's recent announcement to remove all barriers to service is a testament to the power of proving opposition wrong through performance. Women have proven their capabilities through sacrifice, determination, and commitment to country. Therefore, the decision to rescind the last restrictions to full gender integration is long overdue, but perhaps another example of how the Air Force has led the way for the other service branches.

Chapter 4

The Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law.

--President Barack H. Obama

Throughout the course of history, America has realized that elections have consequences. The election of the 44th President of the United States, Barack H. Obama was no different. As a candidate, Obama pledged to work closely with military leaders and the Congress to repeal the 1993 law legislating the ban against gays and lesbians serving openly in the military. In 2011, Congress passed a bill repealing the 1993 law, and President Obama signed it with the caveat that the military had time to prepare for effective implementation. In due time, the military and consequently the Air Force, concurred with Obama’s directive to rescind the policy codified in Title 10 U.S. code section 654 and certified their readiness to implement the policy change. Although in other instances, the military has led society in terms of progressive policies, the repeal of DADT was a long awaited change that finally brought the military closer in line with the accepted social norms.

Long before President Clinton and Congress compromised on the policy regarding homosexuality in the military, there were policies in place that regulated the sexual activities of military personnel. Regulations during the First World War and World War II banned sodomy and homosexual activity, declaring those who engaged in such perverse sexual practices as unsuitable for military service.¹ Although not formalized in the same fashion as policies in 1993, the military’s early practice was to discharge soldiers without honor based on the notion that homosexual activity was undesirable in the military and illegal in some states. When the 1951 Uniform Code of Military Justice made sodomy—to include oral and anal sex—subject to court martial, the intent was to apply the law equally to both heterosexuals and homosexuals.² Yet in

¹ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND’s 1993 Study* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010), 40.

² National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 40.

reality, it often served as the justification to force homosexuals out of military service. Throughout the late 1960s, 1970s and the early 1980s, the Department of Defense drafted and altered several administrative policies regarding the mandatory separation of gays and lesbians as the services struggled to maintain a consistent and fair policy. Ultimately, the rationale given for the 1981 policy requiring discharge of admitted homosexuals was that “homosexuality is incompatible with military service.”³ Arguments against integration of openly gay and lesbian soldiers echoed concerns about African-Americans and women serving in the military. Justification of the policy ranged from concern about physical and mental “unfitness to serve,” to arguments based on impact to military mission accomplishment because of disruption to readiness and cohesion.⁴

As presidential politics grew in complexity in the early 1990s, the subject of gays serving in the military and the perceived inconsistent implementation of the current prohibiting policies were once again at the forefront. During the 1992 presidential campaign, candidate Bill Clinton announced that upon election he would provide an executive order to end discrimination in the military based on sexual orientation.⁵ Unfortunately, Clinton did not realize how difficult such an executive order would be to implement. Considering that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, had announced that lifting the ban would cause an interruption to good order and discipline and the fact that critics were claiming it would be the “most radical change to the social fabric of the American military” since racial integration, Clinton faced an uphill battle.⁶

Almost immediately, after Clinton took office in 1993, those opposing the potential reversal of the ban on gays and lesbians formed a united front, demonstrating to the President and the Secretary of Defense their dissatisfaction with Clinton’s plans. The increasing tension over the right response to gays in the military was reflective of the battle occurring across the United States as people struggled with the acceptance of

³ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 41.

⁴ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2010), 21.

⁵ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 41.

⁶ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 42.

homosexuality as a way of life.⁷ As Congress grew nervous that Clinton would issue an executive order to lift the ban, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole from Kansas warned the White House of their plan to legislate the ban formally. Essentially, such action would mean that if Clinton issued an executive order, the Congress would reverse those changes by laws, which would consequently become nearly impossible to veto.⁸ The White House realized the congressional action would set their cause back even further and decided it was best to address the issue later. However, as time progressed, Clinton faced solid opposition and he proclaimed that “those who want the ban to be lifted completely...must understand that such action would have faced certain and decisive reversal by Congress.”⁹ Without the support of Congress and the necessary backing of the American public, President Clinton had to compromise on his campaign pledge with changes to Section 654 of Title 10 of the US Code, commonly known as the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law. In 1993, the ban on openly gay men and women serving in the military remained the rule. A member was now subject to involuntary separation if he or she was guilty of “engaging or attempting to engage in a homosexual act or soliciting another to engage in such an act; stating that he or she is homosexual or bisexual, or words to that effect; or for marrying or attempting to marry an individual of the same sex.”¹⁰

One could debate the merits of the law and the compromise that Clinton made on his campaign promise; in hindsight, one might acknowledge that by allowing homosexuals to serve, the law allowed for some progress that would ultimately set the stage for more gains in the future. Over the 18-year history of DADT, the country found itself in a number of conflicts including Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, where many troops began to realize they were serving with capable, honorable, and respected gay soldiers, even if those soldiers had not publicly declared so. As surveys of service personnel later revealed, 75 percent of members worked with leaders, co-workers, or subordinates that they believed to be gay or lesbian.¹¹ The study also

⁷ Nathaniel Frank, *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America* (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), xix.

⁸ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 42.

⁹ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 43.

¹⁰ Department of Defense Directive 1304.26, *Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction*. Attachment: “Restriction on Personal Conduct in the Armed Force,” 5 February 1994, 1.

¹¹ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 71.

found that those service members who believed they had served with gays or lesbians were more likely than those who had not, to view repeal as having a positive, mixed, or no effect on “unit cohesion, unit effectiveness, unit readiness, recruiting, retention, and family readiness.”¹² While many deem DADT a flawed policy, the fact that homosexuals were able to serve, albeit in a discrete fashion, helped to lay the foundation for the fight for their open service. In a nuanced way, like women in combat, gay individuals helped prove themselves through their performance.

While President George W. Bush’s administration voiced opposition to re-addressing the DADT policy for several reasons such as focusing on the Global War on Terrorism, advocacy groups remained centered on changing the restrictive policy. Advocates transitioned from a focus on reforming the policy to repealing the policy in its entirety and began lobbying members of Congress for support. The debate no longer focused on the policy implementation specifics but rather on whether or not Congress should repeal the policy. After a 15-year hiatus, and following a report from the Government Accountability Office regarding the financial costs of the policy, Congressional action took place as the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee began DADT related hearings in 2008.¹³ The issue was now back at the forefront and became a topic of interest during the 2008 presidential election.

Once in office, advocates for the repeal of DADT wondered how long it would take President Obama to fulfill his campaign promise. The equality and gay rights advocates viewed the potential repeal of the policy as a major advance in civil rights and were eager to do so while a Democrat was in the White House. After a number of civil court cases such as *Lawrence v. Texas* and the *Log Cabin Republicans v. U.S.* found the DADT policy unconstitutional, advocates sought a more solid victory.¹⁴ With growing momentum in the civil courts, both the Secretary of Defense and the President became concerned. Their desire was to have Congress resolve the issue versus a number of lower courts. The momentum led to action, and, in 2010, the President signed the bill passed by Congress to repeal the policy. Although it was a momentous step toward equal rights for

¹² Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 71.

¹³ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 60.

¹⁴ William D. Araiza and Dan Woods, *Aspatore Special Report: Understanding the Repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell* (USA: Thomson Reuters/Aspatore, 2011), 7.

gays, the policy would not become effective until after the military deemed it was ready to implement the change and a mandatory 60-day period had passed. At the one-year anniversary of the repeal of DADT, the predictions hailed by opposition to the repeal never came to fruition as the military demonstrated its ability to implement the new policy in a deliberate, professional manner and without impact to military effectiveness, cohesion and morale.

Policy

As the history of DADT reveals, the battle for those advocating equal rights for gays in the military had been a long and difficult one. Although Clinton sought to use his executive power to pursue what he felt was right, the political and public context was not conducive to the change. By 2010, Obama found a very different American public and an amenable Congress that allowed for the long awaited repeal of the ban on openly gay men and women in the military. Obama believed the essence of American democracy meant equality for all, regardless of sexual orientation, and he sought to remove barriers that he believed denied equal rights to some men and women and forced them to lie about their identity. Additionally, he understood the costs weighed on the military and national security, as the policy often led to the separation or denial of individuals with the skills and experience needed in the military.

When DADT became the law, the intent was that members would not disclose their sexual orientation upon entry into the military nor reveal their orientation or homosexual conduct while serving. However, as it turns out, the implementation of the policy was extremely difficult. Leaders were unable to implement the standard in a consistent fashion across the branches of service as the grounds for discharge were entirely too broad. Members could be forced to separate for as simple of a statement as “Yes, I am a homosexual,” whether or not they actually had a propensity to engage in the prohibited sexual behavior.¹⁵ While the intent was to keep gays out of the military, the ill-constructed policy allowed individuals seeking separation to manipulate the system as well.

Other reasons encouraging the military leaders, members of Congress, and the President to embrace the momentum towards repeal of the policy, include the

¹⁵ Araiza, and Woods, *Aspatore Special Report*, 14.

implications on military combat readiness. Over the course of the policy's history, the military has suffered a huge financial burden and loss of critical expertise. Consider the recent case of Arabic linguists during Operation Iraqi Freedom. President Bush ordered a 50 percent increase in the intelligence field for officers who could speak "mission-critical" languages such as Arabic.¹⁶ However, as highlighted by Nathaniel Frank, in *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America*, individuals such as Ian Finkenbinder, an Army soldier who graduated from the Defense Language Institute in Monterey and proficient in Arabic, were forced out of military service because of sexual orientation.¹⁷ Unfortunately, this example is only one of many. As reported by the Government Accountabilities Office (GAO) in a 2005 report regarding the financial cost and loss of critical skills due to DADT, 757 (8 percent) of the 9,488 service members separated between 1994 and 2003 held critical occupations.¹⁸ More specifically, 322 (3 percent) of those separated had some skills in a key foreign language such as Arabic, Farsi or Korean.¹⁹ When the country needed them most, the military discharged soldiers with critical skills because of their sexual orientation.

For a number of years, studies conducted by governmental and independent agencies have failed to show empirical evidence that homosexual activity negatively affects military readiness. For example, in the 1957 Crittenden report for the Secretary of the Navy, the committee found that there was no existing factual data to support the idea that homosexuals are a greater security risk than heterosexuals, yet the Navy refused to release the report.²⁰ In the late 1980s, the Department of Defense commissioned its own study through the Personnel Security Research and Education Center, which could not find any evidence demonstrating that gays were unsuitable for military service.²¹ In 1993, RAND worked alongside a Military Working Group to study the issue and find implementation alternatives related to Clinton's executive order before signing the final

¹⁶ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, 218.

¹⁷ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, 219.

¹⁸ Government Accountabilities Office, *Financial Costs and Loss of Critical Skills Due to DOD's Homosexual Conduct Policy Cannot be Completely Estimated*, 2005, 1.

¹⁹ Government Accountabilities Office, *Financial Costs and Loss of Critical Skills*, 1.

²⁰ Lawrence J. Korb, Sean E. Duggan, and Laura Conley, *Ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell": Practical Steps to Repeal the Ban on Openly Gay Men and Women in the U.S. Military* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2009), 13.

²¹ Korb, Duggan, and Conley, *Ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell,"* 13.

bill. Based on historical data related to racial and gender integration, examples from international militaries, and successful integration in US public safety organizations, RAND concluded that “sexual orientation, by itself, was not germane to military service.”²² Their report also recommended that the military adopt a policy focusing on actual conduct of its members instead of presumed behavior based on sexual orientation, forming a standard of conduct applicable to all members. However, the overwhelming lack of data was not sufficient to reverse the opinion of the majority in Congress and the public that homosexuals openly serving in the military would disrupt good order and discipline and negatively affect national security.

Although President Obama signed legislation repealing DADT on 22 December 2010, the certification was not complete until 22 July 2010, and the repeal implementation did not begin until 20 September 2011. Upon announcement of the repeal going in to effect, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced that “Thanks to this change...we move closer to achieving the goal at the foundation of the values that America’s all about—equality, equal opportunity and dignity for all Americans.”²³ The period between the bill’s passage and the President’s signature allowed each branch of the military to assess the impact of the change and prepare members of the Armed Forces for what many perceived as a radical change. Once the military could assure implementation of the repeal would be “consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention of the Armed Forces,” the repeal went into effect, and to the surprise of some has had little to no negative impact since then.²⁴ As Panetta declared in a May 2012 news conference, in the year following the repeal of DADT, the military was successfully implementing the new policy without any impact on morale, unit cohesion or readiness.²⁵

The measured approach to the new policy implementation included a standardized process across the services. Prior to the policy going into effect, then Secretary of

²² Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 22.

²³ Leon E. Panetta, secretary of defense (news conference, Department of Defense, Washington, DC, 20 September 2011).

²⁴ Undersecretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) to Secretaries of the Military Departments, memorandum, *Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”: Quick Reference Guide*, 28 October 2011.

²⁵ Karen Parrish, “Report Shows Success of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Repeal,” *American Forces Press Service*, 10 May 2012.

Defense Robert M. Gates described what he perceived as a three-step process to implementation followed by the Department of Defense.²⁶ Step one included finalizing changes to applicable regulations and policies related to conduct and benefits. During step two, the DOD prepared training materials for key personnel involved in implementation, such as chaplains and commanders. Finally, step three served as the training phase for all service members. Additionally, DOD published repeal policy guidance for all service members that outlined the changes to separations, accessions and recruiting, re-accessions, and standards of conduct.²⁷ The new guidance directed each service to identify any specific instructions or regulations related to those areas. The Air Force Chief of Staff at the time, General Norton A. Schwartz, announced the Air Force's full cooperation and, by February 2011, released a detailed plan for training all Airmen. In a three-tiered training plan, the Air Force sought to train functional experts, commanders and senior enlisted, and then the broader force, in order to ensure a successful and professional response to the policy changes. In addition to listing the 22 Air Force Instructions altered due to the policy change, Air Force members were able to read about repeal related news and guidance on the Air Force Portal webpage designed specifically for the new policy.²⁸ The measured, professional process followed by the Air Force and the other services ensured there were no major problems by the one-year anniversary of the repeal.

Society

In terms of accepting gay men and women as equals, American society has struggled to overcome deeply rooted prejudices based on ignorance, religion, and/or hatred. As with racial integration and gender integration, public opinion regarding gays in the military has shifted over time, but the open debates waged in the period before the policy change reflect pessimism based on personal opinions versus empirical studies. Studies conducted by RAND, revealed a drastic shift in American attitudes between the 1993 and 2010 policy changes. Polls conducted by several news sources highlighted a

²⁶ Cheryl Pellerin, "Gates Outlines 'Don't Ask' Repeal Process," *American Forces Press Service*, 7 January 2011.

²⁷ For details on the published policy guidance, see Undersecretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, Memorandum For Secretaries of the Military Departments, "Repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell and Future Impact on Policy, 28 January 2011.

²⁸ The website available to Airmen can be found at <http://www.af.mil/dontask,donttell/index.asp>

growing trend in support for the idea that the military should allow gay men and women to serve openly. In the case of the repeal of DADT, it appears the move to disregard sexual orientation in the military helped bring the military in line with social norms, rather than the Air Force truly leading social change.

In the early 1990s, the staunch resistance against President Clinton's efforts to remove the ban on gays in the military helps suggest the impact of the overwhelming perception that homosexuality was immoral and incompatible with military service. At the time, research conducted by national polling and news organizations found that only 40 percent of the public supported the idea of gay men and women serving openly in the military.²⁹ Discussion among members of Congress and among military troops reflected such public opinion. As Senator Strom Thurmond from South Carolina declared, the "almost universal judgment of our Nation and military experts has supported the policy of excluding openly declared homosexuals from the Armed Services."³⁰ Essentially, the Nation and members of the military were not in favor of allowing gay men and women to serve openly, and it seemed that was enough to keep the President from making the policy change. Interestingly, over time, the argument shifted from justifying the ban, based on mental and physical fitness, to opposing the service of gays based on military effectiveness.³¹ As was the case during consideration for racial and gender integration, members of Congress argued that removal of the ban on gays would hinder military efficiency, cohesion and fighting power—negatively effecting national security.³²

A major aspect of the social resistance to removing the ban on gays during the 1990s was the increasing awareness and debate regarding HIV/AIDS. As the public became more aware of HIV/AIDS cases, the disease was associated with homosexual activity and the greater chance of gay men contracting the disease fed into the homophobia of the period.³³ It would take time, scientific progress, and dissemination of the truth regarding health risks, to help educate the public. Undoubtedly, the climate Clinton faced in the 1990s was vastly different from the climate Obama faced in the early

²⁹ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell,"* 24.

³⁰ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 45.

³¹ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 41.

³² Korb, Duggan, and Conley, *Ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell,"* 7.

³³ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 20.

part of the twenty-first century.

By the time Obama sought election to the presidency, the American public shifted in its opinion on gay men and women serving openly in the military. Increased visibility of gay and lesbian issues such as hate crimes and same-sex partner benefits in public discourse helped inform citizens and enable them to form opinions based on facts versus speculation.³⁴ The following figures from the 2010 National Defense Research Institute and Comprehensive Review Working Group, depict the change in public opinion regarding gays in the military between the climate during Clinton and Obama's terms:

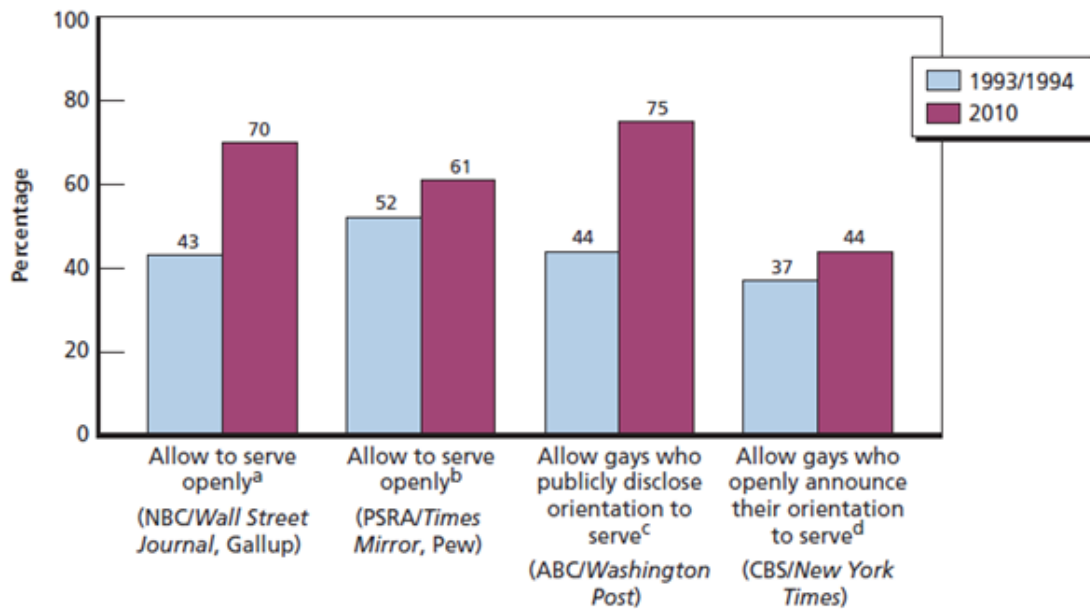


Figure 1: Change in Opinions About Gay Men and Lesbians Serving *Without* Restriction in the Military

Source: Roper Center iPOLL Databank, retrieved from National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND's 1993 Study*, 82.

³⁴ National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 69.

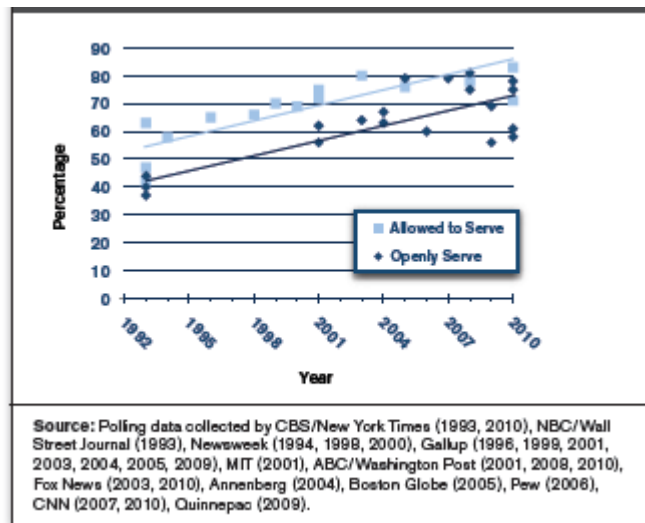


Figure 2: American Public Support for Allowing Gay Men and Lesbians to Serve in the U.S. Military Service

Source: Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 25.

By 2010, the majority opinion among American society and even among military members had shifted. Although polls of service members lack the “methodological rigor of many of the public opinion polls,” those conducted by organizations such as Zogby International demonstrated a similar general trend toward as the greater society.³⁵ In 2006, Zogby conducted a poll of 545 U.S. Military Personnel who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan and found that 78 percent stated they felt comfortable around gays and that they would join the military regardless of their open inclusion in the services.³⁶ However, the military’s trend toward acceptance of open service did lag behind the progress made in the public. The same Zogby survey found that only 26 percent agreed that gays should be allowed to serve while 37 percent disagreed.³⁷ As these examples of polling data illustrate, the military lagged behind public acceptance of the open service of gay men and women.

³⁵ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 25.

³⁶ Zogby International, “Opinions of Military Personnel on Sexual Minorities in the Military,” 2006, available at <http://www.palmcenter.org/files/active/1/ZogbyReport.pdf>, 6.

³⁷ Zogby International, “Opinions of Military Personnel on Sexual Minorities in the Military,” 5.

Military Organization

Although the repeal of DADT is only 18 months old, the evidence gathered thus far indicates a lack of negative impact. Unlike the claims made by members of Congress, senior military leaders, and pundits in the media, the military has proven itself a professional organization once again, capable of change. As with racial and gender integration, the repeal of DADT illustrates how “in matters of personnel change within the military, predictions and surveys tend to overestimate the negative consequences for unit cohesion and military effectiveness, and underestimate the U.S. military’s ability to adapt and incorporate within its rank the diversity that is reflective of American society at large.”³⁸ The presumed difficulties in implementing the repeal have failed to surface. Since President Obama signed the repeal into action, there have not been widespread disciplinary, physical, or cohesion problems. In fact, it would not be exaggerating to suggest that the repeal has helped strengthen the Air Force considering how the new policy halts the loss of otherwise qualified individuals and reverses the economic losses instituted by the old policy.

At the one-year mark of the repeal of DADT, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta acknowledged the military’s successful implementation of the policy change saying, “It’s not impacting on morale. It’s not impacting on unit cohesion. It is not impacting on readiness.”³⁹ Such news might be surprising when compared to the warnings launched by staunch opponents to the change. As the transcript from hearings before the Committee on Armed Services of the United States Senate reveals, Senator John McCain placed a lot of faith in the responses of the surveys given to military members in anticipation of the repeal. His interpretation of the statistics helped reinforce his viewpoint that allowing gay members to serve openly in the military would impact cohesion and military effectiveness. During the hearing, Senator McCain proved to be one of the harshest critics. “It is surprising in light of these findings that the Working Group concluded that the repeal of DADT will present low risk to the United States Military...Please explain on what basis you conclude that concerns of servicemembers

³⁸ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 128.

³⁹ Karen Parrish, “Report Shows Success of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Repeal,” *American Forces Press Service*, 10 May 2012.

about deterioration of military unit cohesion are exaggerated, and that the risks to military readiness are acceptable for our national security.”⁴⁰ In response to McCain, General Ham (Commander, U.S. Army Europe, Co-Chair of the Comprehensive Working Group) responded by highlighting how the particular responses Senator McCain focused on were to survey questions that reflected predictions. Research data demonstrates however, that “predictions are not always a good indicator of actual future behavior.”⁴¹ Therefore, basing policy around the 24 percent of servicemembers who responded that the repeal of DADT would make them think about leaving or actually leave the military sooner than they planned for example, would be unwise. Ultimately, a number of factors affect such decisions, and other responses to the survey questions highlighted that the repeal of DADT was not a high priority issue for individuals considering their future military service. The survey of servicemembers was only one component of the implementation of DADT and as the period since its repeal suggests, the predictions made before the 2011 overestimated the negative consequences of the policy change.

In March of 2009, 1,050 retired admirals and generals signed a statement addressed to President Obama in support of the 1993 law regarding homosexuals in the military. By May of 2010, there were 1,167 signatories. The retired senior military leaders stated their firm belief that homosexuality is incompatible with military service and that the 1993 law passed by Congress protects good order, discipline and morale. The statement warned the president that repeal would “undermine recruiting and retention, impact leadership at all echelons, have adverse effects on the willingness of parents who lend their sons and daughters to military service, and eventually break the All-Volunteer Force.”⁴² While such a statement made by an impressive array of leaders would seem influential, there are questions regarding the validity of the list orchestrated by Elaine Donnelly of The Center for Military Readiness. As members of Servicemembers United uncovered, the list of signatories included a general who died

⁴⁰ Senate, *Department of Defense Working Group Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of Section 654 of Title 10, U.S.C., “Policy Concerning Homosexuality in the Armed Forces: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services*, 111th Cong., 2d sess., 2010, S. HRG. 111-899, 70.

⁴¹ Senate, *Department of Defense Working Group Comprehensive Review*, 70.

⁴² Flag and General Officers for the Military, “Support for the 1993 Law Regarding Homosexuals in the Military,” Center for Military Readiness, <http://www.cmrlink.org/data/sites/85/CMRDocuments/FlagOfficersLetterPOTUS-033109.pdf> (accessed 19 February 2013).

before the writing of the statement, and other elderly officers who upon questioning, stated they knew nothing about the statement.⁴³ In spite of the dire predictions made by the opposition to the repeal, an assessment by the Palm Center describes how at the one-year anniversary of the repeal there is not any evidence of negative impact on the military.

The Palm Center's thorough research included outreach to 553 of the generals and admirals who signed the statement against the repeal, 18 watchdog organization, major advocates and opponents of the repeal, and 62 active-duty heterosexual, lesbian, gay and bisexual troops from every service branch.⁴⁴ The research team itself included scholars from military academies, professional military education residence programs and experts on the issue. Their research covered the six to twelve month period after the repeal and included ten research strategies including interviews with the various advocacy groups, surveys, on-site observations of four military units, and content analysis of 462 relevant media articles.⁴⁵ Based on the evidence uncovered by such research, the Palm Center's team concluded that "DADT repeal has had no overall negative impact on military readiness or its component dimensions, including cohesion, recruitment, retention, assaults, harassment or morale."⁴⁶ Table 2, on the following page, depicts the categories analyzed and the observation that the moral category had some minor variation but no overall negative effects.

⁴³ Alexander Nicholson, *Fighting to Serve: Behind the Scenes in the War to Repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, Inc., 2012), 125.

⁴⁴ Aaron Belkin et al., *One Year Out: An Assessment of DADT Repeal's Impact on Military Readiness*, Palm Center Report (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Los Angeles, 2012), 3.

⁴⁵ Belkin et al., *One Year Out*, 6.

⁴⁶ Belkin et al., *One Year Out*, 6.

Table 2: One-Year Impact of DADT Repeal (September 2011-September 2012)

Category	Impact of DADT repeal	Comments
Readiness	No negative impact	None
Cohesion	No negative impact	None
Recruitment & Retention	No negative impact	None
Assaults & Harassment	No negative impact	None
Morale	No net negative impact, but individual variations	Morale rose for some, fell for others with no net, overall change

Source: *One Year Out: An Assessment of DADT Repeal's Impact on Military Readiness*, Palm Center Report, 5.

Interestingly, the Palm Center's report also indicates there may be positive impact from the repeal of DADT as the policy change has enabled some gays and lesbians to resolve harassment disputes in effective ways that were previously not possible, and in balance, the new policy has "enhanced the military's ability to pursue its mission."⁴⁷ The research group's interviews and observations revealed evidence of the military's enhanced readiness in areas of discipline, command, family readiness and spirituality. In terms of discipline, commanders have more flexibility now because the repeal removes the fear commanders had about disciplining lower level infractions without the service member's orientation becoming known. Commanders also have the ability now to discuss issues that affect a member's ability to perform regardless of the nature of the member's personal relationship and without fear that revealing their homosexuality during dialogue would be grounds for dismissal. This newfound openness allows airmen, soldiers, seamen and marines to talk about their lives, request help when needed, and resolve personal issues effectively in the same manner as their heterosexual counterparts are allowed, enabling them to focus on their mission. In terms of spirituality, some of the chaplains in the study express relief that now anyone can talk openly to them without fear, allowing the number of individuals they can provide services for, to expand. Predictions of numerous negative consequences of the repeal have failed to come to fruition, and, alternatively, the repeal has enhanced the military's ability to perform its

⁴⁷ Belkin et al., *One Year Out*, 4.

mission.

While the Palm Center report provides current evidence of the positive implications of the repeal of DADT, one might also consider how the new policy will no longer force individuals working in critical career fields to separate, decreasing military effectiveness and imposing a huge financial burden on the government. As indicated by the earlier discussion of Frank's findings regarding the number of Arabic linguists lost due to DADT at the height of operations in the Middle East, and the GAO report that 8 percent of the service members separated between 1994 and 2003 held critical occupations, the DADT policy came with a heavy price tag. The Center for American progress suggests that the policy barring openly gay men and women to serve may have cost the government up to \$1.3 billion since 1980.⁴⁸ Although the repeal does not grant gay men and women immunity from discharge now, the ability to be open and honest about their identity will help them to be assets in their units and the military will no longer have to lose individuals serving in critical fields based solely on their sexual orientation.

Conclusion

Although still in its infancy, the repeal of the ban on gays serving openly in the United States military appears to have been a success in spite of the loud opposition voiced against the repeal. While in the case of racial integration and aspects of gender integration, the military has led society, in terms of progressive actions the repeal of DADT actually brought the military closer in line with the majority viewpoint of society that individuals should be able to serve openly. However, in the year following the repeal of DADT, Boy Scouts of America announced it would consider reversing its exclusion of gays in the organization. Although not clear if the Boy Scouts will remove the ban at this time, it is interesting to note that other large organizations are considering similar actions as the military, and it would be interesting to determine the impact of the military's example on such organizations.

While a number of critics voiced opposition to gays serving openly in the military and fought against President Obama's plans to repeal the policy, research conducted since the repeal supports the President's call for fairness and reveals a positive impact on

⁴⁸ Korb, Duggan, and Conley, *Ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell,"* 5.

the military. DADT was essentially a compromise made between President Clinton and Congress because the societal readiness for integration was lacking. Undoubtedly, President Obama's success was due largely to the growing sentiment among the society that excluding qualified individuals from serving their country based solely on sexual orientation was ineffective and no longer tolerable. Many people view the plight of the gay community as a civil rights issue. Regardless of whether one agrees with such sentiment, it is undeniable that the claims made against the repeal by a number of military, media pundits and members of Congress, have proven unfounded.

Chapter 5

Analysis

*The question should be, is it worth trying to do,
not can it be done.*

--Allard Lowenstein

Significance

The historical record presented in this paper thus far provides evidence that the Air Force's removal of barriers to opportunities has served a prominent role in the process of social change. The twenty-first century Air Force now declares that diversity is one of America's strengths and gives the Air Force a decisive advantage in global engagements.¹ Although the Air Force has demonstrated leadership and now professes that diversity is an imperative, there are likely to be struggles in the future that test the institution's commitment to progressive change. For this reason, there is value in analyzing the historical journey taken in terms of social issues, and understanding the impact of the Air Force's example in the process. Perhaps discussion of the Air Force's ability to adapt to fundamental changes in military personnel policies, and overcome the ominous predictions regarding such policy changes, can inform decision-makers and Airmen who will undoubtedly face challenges related to social issues in the near future.

Simply declaring that the Air Force values diversity is not enough to ensure the organization will meet its strategic diversity objectives. A key aspect of diversity is the presence of a plurality of perspective.² Although Airmen come from different backgrounds and carry with them a multitude of experiences, biases, and prejudices, there is great value in the exchange of ideas. Often, ignorance breeds hatred and discriminatory tendencies. Through the exchange of information, ideas, and perspectives, there is an opportunity for increased cooperation and improved understanding. Sharing the historical cases outlined in this paper and discussing them without fear of reproach is one example of how the Air Force can strengthen its diversity. As Lieutenant General William Lord states in *Attitudes Aren't Free*, "Our goal should always be to seek a

¹ Air Force Diversity Operations, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap: A Journey to Excellence* (Washington, DC: AF/A1DV, 2010), 3.

² James E. Parco, and David A. Levy, eds., *Attitudes Aren't Free: Thinking Deeply about Diversity in the US Armed Forces* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2010), vii.

greater understanding and a mutual respect of our fellow Americans—particularly those who have sworn to give their lives in the defense of our country.”³ Sharing perspectives and raising awareness of issues does not guarantee that individuals will change their own ideas and come to agreement on matters of consequence. However, as Allard Lowenstein’s quote at the start of this chapter suggests, the value gained from the process should motivate us to inform Airmen. The chance that the process may not completely alter individual Airmen’s perspectives should not deter us from trying to inform.

Admittedly, there are limits to the ability of information to alter an individual’s beliefs or motivate him or her to action. Although logic suggests that access to applicable information is important for sound decision-making, a vast amount of data does not automatically equate to success in any endeavor, including changing individual perspectives and assumptions.⁴ As Robert Jervis explains in *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, people draw inferences based on logic and past experiences, which produces rational cognitive consistency and causes them to “fit incoming information into pre-existing beliefs and to perceive what they expect to be there.”⁵ Therefore, even with increased awareness of social ills and sharing how influential the Air Force has been in the process of social change, there are likely to be individuals who fail to see the value of diversity and utilize the new information to solidify their own ideological arguments.

However strong cognitive consistency is and the likelihood that individuals will dismiss information discrepant to their point of view, the Air Force has proven throughout history that when leadership dictates a new policy, Airmen are capable of enforcing the policy in a professional manner. As an increasingly diverse society today where white Americans are quickly becoming the minority, there is a growing chance that Airmen will see value in discussing the role of the Air Force in social change and utilizing the past to inform decision-making in the future. The Air Force has decided the value of diversity outweighs adherence to individual biases, declaring plans to follow a strategic diversity roadmap with priorities and corresponding goals with actions that will

³ Parco and Levy, eds., *Attitudes Aren’t Free*, vii.

⁴ Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2009), 13.

⁵ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 143.

institutionalize diversity throughout the Air Force and allow the organization to attract, recruit, develop and retain a high quality, talented Total Force.⁶ The Air Force can achieve its diversity goals in a number of ways, but long-term success is more likely if individual Airmen see value in diversity and believe in the process. This paper represents a hopeful step toward that goal.

In *Start with Why*, Simon Sinek discusses the difference between decision-making by design and that by default. Sinek tells the story of a group of American car executives who travel to Japan and observe a vehicle assembly line. The American executives were surprised when the vehicles reached the end of the line where the doors were put on the hinges and the Japanese workers did not tap the edges of the door with a mallet to ensure it fit perfectly. This confused the Americans as their own assembly line included individuals whose specific duty was to tap the door with a mallet. They asked the Japanese to describe the point at which they make sure the door fits perfectly. The Japanese guide replied that they “make sure it fits when [they] design it.”⁷ In the Japanese auto plant, they engineered the outcome they wanted from the beginning rather than waiting until the end of the process to examine a problem, accumulate data to figure it out, and decide on a solution. Although both courses of action led to similar results (cars with doors appearing to fit perfectly), the Japanese had the advantages of having one less position on the assembly line, not requiring rubber mallets, and the likelihood their doors are safer in the event of an accident. As Sinek attests, “All this for no other reason than they ensured the pieces fit from the start.”⁸ This scenario is relevant to the discussion of diversity in the Air Force, as Airmen must realize creating a diverse organization is not something that will just happen on its own or that one can manipulate at the metaphorical end of the assembly line. Creating a productive and diverse Air Force will require education, training, and adaptation from the start if the benefits are to last long-term and be as advantageous in the global arena as desired. The intent of this study is to provide an aspect of such beneficial education.

Limitations

The historical, comparative method utilized in this study helps explain

⁶ Air Force Diversity Operations, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 4.

⁷ Sinek, *Start with Why*, 14.

⁸ Sinek, *Start with Why*, 14.

phenomena occurring in two or more social systems.⁹ The social systems explored throughout this paper include the military, specifically the Air Force, and American society. Consideration of three historical case studies allows for examination of the Air Force's role in the process of social change. Because of the temporal separation between each case, and fundamental differences in the nature of each case, there are limitations to the extent of the comparative method's explanatory power. Comparison of the cases in terms of the analytical factors of policy, society, and military organization would be incomplete without first divulging the differences in dynamics between them and the corresponding limitations.

Obviously, each case study takes place at different times. As such, there are other exogenous factors influencing society and the Air Force in a particular case that may not be present in the other cases. However, this is an important factor in the study of social change as those external factors may be the enabling or prohibiting element for a particular social change to take place in the Air Force. In the present study, limiting analysis to the Air Force's role in the process of social change helps alleviate the negative impact of temporal separation.

Another limiting factor in the current study is the fact that each of the case studies includes a particular problem that differs in unique ways from at least one of the other cases or both. In terms of racial integration, the major issue centers around race—a trait that individuals have no self-control over, which manifests itself in distinguishable physical attributes, and often shapes an individual's perspective of others. The idea of women in combat is an issue because of inherent biological differences between men and women, fundamental beliefs that women are the weaker gender, and the expectation that because of their childbearing capability women should fulfill roles drastically different from men. Moreover, the central concerns in the debate on gay men and women serving openly in the military stem from the conflict with religious beliefs, unwarranted fears of the spread of homosexuality among Airmen, and the belief that homosexuality is a choice. Although each case dynamic is not exactly like the others, the common threads woven through each case, which allow for comparison, include oppression of a minority

⁹ William H. Sewell Jr., "Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History," *History and Theory* 6, no. 2 (1967): 208-218.

group, misperceptions of capabilities, and the reflection of society's ills in the Air Force.

Findings

Policy

In order to understand the Air Force's impact in the process of social change, it is first necessary to dissect the policy decisions made in each case study. Who were the key decision-makers? What were their policy goals and why? How were decisions leading up to the policy changes made? Answering such questions and comparing the results across the cases provides insight into the decision-making process leading to the Air Force's impact on change, and can inform future policy decisions.

Key Decision-Makers. In the case of racial integration of the Air Force, there were a number of contributing factors to include work done by the Gillem Board, the Committee on Civil Rights, Air Force leadership and of course President Truman. While Truman's Executive Order was the final catalyst for change, other individuals recognized the need to eliminate unfair treatment of personnel based on their race, and they were courageously willing to state so in policy recommendations and legislative proposals. The Gillem Board's suggestions, although not carried out, acknowledged the necessary steps to take and the challenge presented by the proposal to implement personnel changes. The Committee on Civil Rights also acknowledged the need for change and suggested the President seek legislative action against the discriminatory practices. The Air Force's own commissioned inquiry found the segregation practices and quota system as hindrances to effective operations, influencing General Spaatz to alter his own view on the issue.¹⁰ As influential as each of the described organizations were in setting the foundation for racially integrating the Air Force, Truman's 1948 Executive Order proved most important. Truman's audacious decision to end mistreatment of individuals in the armed services based on their race altered the course of history and enabled the Air Force and other branches of the armed forces to become the more diverse and empowered military it is today.

Identifying the key decision-makers in the case of women in combat roles is not as simple as that of racial integration because of the extensive nature of the struggle and

¹⁰ Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates: 1945-1964*, Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 64.

lack of a single decision declaring a policy change such as Truman's Executive Order. As the historical record illustrates, women have served informally in combat conditions and roles since the American Revolution. Therefore, a complete debate regarding women serving in combat roles must include a discussion of their informal role as well, and attribution of the decision to allow women to serve in that manner to a particular decision-maker is not feasible. One of the important preliminary articles of legislation for women was the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act passed by Congress under the leadership of Senator Margaret Chase Smith.¹¹ Smith's work to help remove the barrier to women serving formally in the military was a necessary and relevant step in the effort to allow women equal opportunities to serve that continues today. Although wrought with restricting conditions and limitations on women's service, the Senator's legislative efforts formed the basis upon which legislation in the 1960s and 1990s would build to open opportunities for women to serve.

The class-action lawsuits demonstrating growing frustration with unfair personnel practices and the legislative work completed by Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, combined with the election of President Clinton in 1992, laid the groundwork for the removal of barriers to combat aviation and the 1994 removal of barriers to women serving on combat ships.¹² Interestingly, in the case of women in combat aviation, the most influential parties were Congress and Defense Department leadership. Today, while President Obama has always advocated for equal opportunities for women, the decision to remove the final barriers for women serving in combat occupations actually aligns more with the Secretary of Defense and senior military leaders' field of responsibility versus presidential politics. The Defense Department has determined the time is right to remove gender-based barriers to service.

Unlike in the case of racial integration, where a single Executive Order altered personnel practices, the decision to allow women to serve in combat is a story of a number of legislative decisions over the course of 65 years that is still not fully resolved. In both instances, senior leaders of the military, members of Congress, the President, and

¹¹ Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women: Effects Upon Readiness, Cohesion, and Morale* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), 2.

¹² Darlene M. Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces: A Guide to the Issues* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 27, 29.

military members themselves, played a role in shaping the outcome, demonstrating that regardless of the mechanism for change (legislation, Executive Order, DOD policy), it takes the input and support of prominent individuals who see benefit in change and a willingness among society to make it happen. This was also true in the case of the repeal of DADT.

Regulations against gays serving openly in the military originated in the First World War, while the 1993 law codified in Title 10 U.S. code section 654, known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” made it illegal for gays to disclose their sexual orientation or practice homosexual behavior while serving in the military.¹³ While President Clinton was the main proponent for removing all barriers to gays serving openly in the military, Congress and the public were not willing to accept a radical departure from established norms and forced Clinton to compromise on his campaign promise. The final decision to pass legislation removing the barrier to gays serving openly was due largely to the support of President Obama and the work of various gay rights advocacy groups such as Servicemembers United and Center for American Progress. The 2011 repeal of DADT, much like the cases of racial integration of the Air Force and women in combat roles, was a product of multiple influential decision-makers in Congress, the Presidency, leaders in the military and strong advocates in the public.

Policy Goals. In each of the three cases studied, impetus for change stemmed from the struggle of those most affected by discriminatory practices. Such individuals sought equality and garnered support of influential decision-makers, who perhaps had their own incentives to act, but acted nonetheless. People desiring equal treatment and respect stood up for their beliefs and inspired military leaders, members of Congress, and Presidents to act. Those people include: African-Americans who returned from World War II with a determination to change their status by alerting the American public to the race issue; women who sought to remove barriers to formal military service out of frustration with sacrificing without the recognition and opportunity afforded their male counterparts; and the men and women fed up with living in fear because of their sexual

¹³ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2010), 19.

preferences.¹⁴

While the desires of the individual people directly impacted by the policies are clear, determining the policy goals of the key decision-makers requires taking the military leaders and politicians involved at their word. In each of the cases, military necessity played a role in attaining the removal of barriers. The multiple commissions and inquiry groups in the Air Force and other branches of the military found that quotas and segregation often hindered operational effectiveness.¹⁵ During conflict when operational needs arose, such as in the invasion of Grenada or Desert Storm women performed admirably demonstrating their abilities, yet failed to obtain the recognition of their accomplishments.¹⁶ In the case of gay servicemembers, the record is mixed. There are a number of instances where the military forced out gays serving in critical positions such as Arabic linguists, when needed most. While there was also a military suspension of the policy during the first Gulf War, and in the wake of 9/11, when members were forced to deploy regardless of their violation of the DADT policy.¹⁷ What these cases illustrate is that operational necessity often drove leaders to violate discriminatory rules, and the empirical data demonstrating the burden of retaining such rules empowered leaders (military and civilian) to voice support for change.

Although operational necessity was a major justification for change given in public by military and civilian leaders, there is some evidence that a genuine desire to treat every soldier with dignity, respect, and equality was present. While Air Force Chief of Staff General Spaatz decided the Air Force would no longer practice quotas or segregation because of the convincing data that it undermined the Air Force's operational potential, President Truman overcame his own prejudices and, as some historians believe,

¹⁴ Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts 1939-1953* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 1.

Billie Mitchell, "The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie: Betty Grable or Frankenstein?" in *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military*, edited by Judith Hicks Stiehm (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), 54.

¹⁵ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 64.

¹⁶ Lorry M. Fenner, "Either You Need These Women or You Do Not: Informing the Debate on Military Service and Citizenship," in *Women in the Military* edited by Rita J. Simon (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 16.

¹⁷ Lawrence J. Korb, Sean E. Duggan, and Laura Conley, *Ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell": Practical Steps to Repeal the Ban on Openly Gay Men and Women in the U.S. Military* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2009), 5.

Nathaniel Frank, *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America* (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), 227.

his sympathy for the hardships faced by African-Americans helped motivate him.¹⁸ Similarly, in the case of women in combat, a mix of operational necessity and the belief that women were unfairly treated motivated many military leaders such as Dwight Eisenhower and members of Congress. Eisenhower, in particular, was convinced “there was a permanent place for women in the services.”¹⁹ President Obama understood the operational necessity behind the repeal of DADT, but the morality of the issue also drove him to push Congress to act. His sentiments were evident when he stated during the 2010 State of the Union address that repealing the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country they love because of who they are is “the right thing to do.”²⁰ As one would expect, decision-makers involved in each case retained at least a degree of sympathetic feelings toward the fundamental civil rights issue at hand, but their declared justification rested largely on operational necessity.

How Decisions Were Made. Each case study provides insight into how our country often makes policy decisions that affect the military. Because the structure of the US military involves civilian oversight, major decisions are a product of exchanges between senior military and civilian leadership. In theory, such a relationship should be easy to manage; civilians seeking change could simply ask the military to abide by new standards. However, the military is a traditional institution capable of energetic resistance, and the civilians are politicians with mixed motives.²¹ As such, in reality, public debate regarding drastic changes to military policy such as racial integration, women serving in combat roles, and homosexuals openly serving, prove contentious and time consuming. In each case, the process leading up to the policy change included public discourse, presidential politics, congressional insight and citizen involvement. Although resistance in each situation echoed one another, history has proven the loudest critics to change in each instance were incorrect in their alarmist predictions. However, one cannot dismiss the value of debating the issue among all interested parties.

¹⁸ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 64.

Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 160.

¹⁹ Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 7.

²⁰ Alexander Nicholson, *Fighting to Serve: Behind the Scenes in the War to Repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, Inc., 2012), 106.

²¹ Judith Hicks Stiehm, *It’s Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), ix.

Ultimately, for success of a new policy, Airmen must embrace the change.

Society

Understanding the social context surrounding each major policy change helps reveal the relationship between the Air Force and American society, allowing further evidence of the role the Air Force plays in the process of social change. One gains such awareness by asking several questions of the evidence. What types of incidents reveal the manifestation of discrimination before and after the policy change? What role did belief systems play in the Air Force's actions? Have the stances the Air Force and other branches of the military taken on difficult social issues helped spur other organizations and segments of society to follow suit?

Discrimination. According to *Webster's Dictionary*, discrimination is "the act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually, or a prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment."²² In all three case studies included in this paper, the Air Force's personnel policies enabled the practice of discrimination against groups based on socially held views, norms, and prejudices. While over time, society and the military acknowledged such practices as inappropriate, the Air Force willfully discriminated against African-Americans, women, and gays because of beliefs based on their collective identities versus individual abilities or actions. Such conduct seems to contradict the basic values of American democracy in general and the mission of the Air Force in particular.

One of the shared characteristics in each case is the fact that each discriminated group viewed their mistreatment as hypocritical of the government and society. The African-Americans returning from World War II where they served heroically and contributed as best as they could, felt disheartened by their continuing unequal status in American society.²³ Many African-Americans held the dominant attitude that "during World War II the Negro [had to] fight for democracy on two fronts—at home as well as abroad."²⁴ Those believing in the struggle for civil rights found it hard to justify fighting Hitler and the Nazis overseas to free a foreign people, while allowing their very own society to practice discrimination against them based on racial background alone.

²² *Riverside Webster's II Dictionary* (New York, NY: Berkley Books, 1996).

²³ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 127.

²⁴ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 111.

Similarly, the continuing debate over gender equality in the military reveals an element of hypocrisy as women have often served informally in combat roles but publicly have been isolated from the recognition of their efforts. Furthering the idea that women do not serve in combat roles by excluding their *assignment* to combat coded specialties, but allowing them to *attach* to units on or near the front lines of battle is disingenuous and conceals the reality of their contributions. In the 1990s, military women began to realize “realities did not need to change; all that remained was to simply recognize the existing reality and alter policy to account for it.”²⁵ The right of women to serve and to gain acknowledgement of their actual sacrifices is in the “interest of actually subscribing to the rhetoric of our democratic political philosophy.”²⁶

In the case of banning gays from serving openly, many advocates for repeal saw the policy as contrary to the Air Force’s actions in the international arena. Advocates interpreted it as the military seeking to spread democratic values across the world while simultaneously revealing itself as “an intolerant place that does not value what [people] value, namely, diversity, fairness, and equality.”²⁷ Each of the cases reveals some level of hypocrisy inherent in the discriminatory acts.

Belief Systems. Racial segregation, exclusion of women from formal combat roles, and regulations against soldiers admitting homosexual behavior are all cases where socially held beliefs informed the limitations on the type of military service particular groups were eligible to perform. Because of the distorted view that African-Americans were inferior to white Americans in terms of intelligence and physical ability, the traditional view that racial integration undermined combat readiness and military effectiveness enabled the military to limit African-Americans in the type of jobs they could perform.²⁸ Reflecting the social unease with the idea of living and working in close proximity with African-Americans, the Air Force and other services limited not only the jobs they could hold, but also where they could live, eat, and socialize.

In the ongoing debate regarding women in combat, the justification for limitations placed on their service has centered on cultural ideology regarding gender roles. For

²⁵ Fenner, “Either You Need These Women or You Do Not”, 17.

²⁶ Fenner, “Either You Need These Women or You Do Not”, 7.

²⁷ Korb, Duggan, and Conley, *Ending “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 2.

²⁸ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, xiii.

example, many believe the Bible justifies the limitations placed on women who should be subservient to their husbands. In addition, some men find it difficult to view women as equals on the battlefield because of their femininity and desirability.²⁹ However, as Lorry Fenner describes in “Either You Need These Women or You Do Not,” the military’s need for women in some capacity in every conflict and the corresponding temporary or emergency adjustments to gender-specific restrictions provides proof that room for cultural shift and challenges to the norm have always been available.³⁰ If women are “good enough” to serve when an emergency exists, then the arguments based on purported concerns for their proper role or safety lose credibility.

One of the central objections, held by military members and civilians alike, against the repeal of DADT was the religious and moral objection to homosexuality. Service members responding to survey questions stated they were “worried that repeal would mean the end of their personal religious freedoms or a censorship of their religious views.”³¹ One member of the DOD’s Comprehensive Working Group’s focus group decreed, “For me personally, it’s morally wrong and socially unacceptable.”³² It is interesting that such a personal belief could serve as justification for the limitations placed on service of gay men and women as a collective. Understandably, there are soldiers who view homosexuality as a contradiction to their personal beliefs. However, the fact that adultery, pre-marital sex, and divorce are unacceptable in some religions should not empower the military to force a member to separate based solely on his or her engagement in any of those activities, or demonstrated the propensity to engage in any such acts, as was the case for homosexual acts. In the case of adultery specifically, one of the main elements of the Uniform Code of Military Justice’s Article 134 is the notion that the adulterous conduct was disruptive to the good order and discipline of the service. Therefore, rather than limiting adulterers, as a collective, from serving in the armed forces, situations are considered on an individual basis. Limiting gay men and women from serving openly forced a number of individuals to lie about their identity—ironically,

²⁹ Mitchell, “The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie,” 39, 50.

³⁰ Fenner, “Either You Need These Women or You Do Not,” 7.

³¹ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 51.

³² Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 51.

‘bearing false witness’ is one of the Ten Commandments. Thus, the religious justification for placing limitations on the service of gay men and women is inconsistent with the allowance of other immoral activities (such as lying). The inconsistency provides grounds for questioning the true motivation behind opposition to such social change.

Domestic Social Context. As previously described, each of the cases involves a minority group’s growing discontent with unequal treatment. African-Americans, women, and gays were advocating for equal opportunities, not necessarily equal outcomes. The issues transpiring in the greater society enabled individuals to translate their outrage into progressive action. At other times, this same discontent hindered their progress.

During and after World War II, America’s economy was booming, and citizens experienced improvements in their standard of living. However, African-Americans did not benefit from newfound opportunities, financial support programs, or economic advancement and they grew weary of the continued disenfranchisement, as evidenced by the growing incidents of racial tension across the country in the 1940s.³³ While President Roosevelt largely ignored the revolutionary changes occurring among the African-American community as they began to organize and demand justice, American race relations became a topic of concern as the status-quo increasingly became intolerable.³⁴ The growing realization that something had to be done helped create the social context apt for Truman’s decisive act in 1948, to integrate the armed forces.

The struggle for women’s equality dates back to the birth of America as a nation. In hindsight, the formal role women have played in the military reflects the role women played in society. However, as previously described, women have contributed to the combat success of their nation in a number of ways including the unorthodox practice of disguising themselves as men. By the time the Air Force removed the combat aviation exclusion in 1993, society generally viewed women as valuable contributors to the work force at large and in the military, resulting in adjustments to a number of restrictive

³³ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 128.

³⁴ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 129.

personnel policies regarding rank, benefits, and pay.³⁵ In modern society, women began to fulfill roles beyond just the support and service tasks such as nursing, playing more and more public roles with increased occupational skills and demonstrated professionalism.³⁶ Socially constructed gender roles have a major impact on the participation of women in the military, and as the period of the 1990s demonstrates, women were fulfilling more roles outside of the traditional duties, and the military needed women in Operation Desert Storm, setting the foundation for the increased combat roles for women.

By 2011 when President Obama signed the legislation repealing DADT, Americans had come to believe that a soldier's private sexual behavior was not grounds for his or her exclusion from service. Whereas in 1993, fears regarding the spread of HIV/AIDS, concern about the prevalence of homosexual troops, and religious concerns combined to further the majority view that homosexual behavior is incompatible with military service, in 2011 President Obama found a much different American public. A majority of Americans began to realize that intolerance based on sexual orientation was no longer right and in practical terms, denying people who want and are capable of serving the nation, degrades readiness.³⁷ Improved education on the transmission of HIV/AIDS, a realization that it is not only a "gay man's disease," and the generational change in mindset combined to create an American society open to accepting individuals as they are and not based on their sexual conduct. While in the other two cases the Air Force was slightly ahead of society in codifying acceptance of the new social norm, few will argue the same in the case of the repeal of DADT. By allowing gay men and women to serve openly, the Air Force and other branches of the military are following the lead of both American and international societies.³⁸

Spurring Change. As one of the more trusted and revered institutions of American society, the military has an ability to influence by its example. Upon Truman's executive order to integrate the military racially, the success demonstrated by the Air

³⁵ Fenner, "Either You Need These Women or You Do Not", 13.

³⁶ Marina Nuciari, "Women in the Military: Sociological Arguments for Integration," in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, ed. Giuseppe Caforio (New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), 280.

³⁷ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2010), 58.

³⁸ Korb, Duggan, and Conley, *Ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell,"* 15.

Force served as an example for the other branches of the military and informed the Supreme Court considering the doctrine of “separate but equal.”³⁹ Indeed, desegregation of the military established an important, necessary precedent for the Federal Government’s role in race relations. In overcoming the strong opposition to change and illustrating the ability to end segregation in the military without the predicted devastation coming to fruition, the military’s example was able to provide ammunition for those seeking further advances in civil rights. The military was one of the first to end discriminatory practices as evidenced by the fact that by 1953, 95 percent of all African-American soldiers were in racially integrated units, while public buses in Montgomery, Alabama, for example, remained racially segregated.⁴⁰ Civil rights advocates looked to the military’s example as proof that their desire for bringing an end to “separate but equal” was attainable. Even today, as citizens debate social issues, many refer to the successful racial integration of the military as an example of the possibilities for implementing change.

That the Supreme Court was curious about the details of the military’s successful racial integration, while considering the doctrine of “separate but equal,” is evidence of how transformational decisions made in the military have had an influence on further advancing society. Moreover, during the research and comprehensive review period for the repeal of DADT, the working group acknowledged how racial integration of the US military in the 1940s and 1950s, and the gender integration of the military that largely took place in the 1970s, provided useful lessons and support of their assessment.⁴¹

In addition, in early 2013, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced their consideration of dropping the ban on gay participants. The policy change would allow local scout troops to make their own decisions regarding membership instead of the national organization. However, upon encountering public resistance, the BSA decided to postpone their decision regarding the gay ban. Interestingly, those encouraging the organization cited the military’s successful repeal of DADT as an example of growing

³⁹ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 4.

⁴⁰ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 8.

⁴¹ Comprehensive Review Working Group, *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,”* 128.

acceptance of gay rights.⁴² Another fascinating example of the influence made by the military's successful implementation of the repeal is found in an article titled "What the Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell can Teach Civilian Employers." In the article, Shanti Atkins and Scott Schneider seek to demonstrate to civilian employers that the example of the repeal and the military's response to it can help organizations to resolve a broad range of controversial issues including "gender identity, politics, race, religion, and free speech."⁴³ The suggestion that "while a military event, the DADT repeal highlights the importance of taking the common sense steps necessary to create truly inclusive, respectful workplaces," serves as a testament to the military's ability to influence other aspects of American society. Some people believe that when one knows better, one can do better. The military's actions, even in the case of the repeal of DADT, when it took its cues from the greater society, still have an ability to influence.

Finally, the 2013 decision to remove the final barriers to women serving in combat roles undoubtedly owes its impetus to the decades of progress women insisted on and worked diligently to achieve. The Air Force Chief of Staff General Welsh announced, "2013 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Department of Defense allowing women to serve as combat pilots...by rescinding the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, we can pursue integrating women into the seven remaining Air Force career fields still closed."⁴⁴ As indicated by Welsh's comment, today's decisions are evidently a factor of previous progress made in the Air Force.

Military Organization

In analyzing the Air Force's role in the process of social change, one must consider specific elements of the organization itself. Specifically, how did the policy change affect the Air Force? Were there cohesion challenges, impacts on discipline, readiness, or recruiting? How did the Air Force implement policy changes? Answers to such questions across the three case studies can inform the study of the Air Force's role

⁴² Nomaan Merchant and David Crary, "Boy Scouts Gay Policy Decision Delayed," *Associated Press*, 6 February 2013.

⁴³ Shanti Atkins and Scott Schneider, "What the Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell Can Teach Civilian Employers," *Law 360*, 12 April 2011, <http://www.law360.com/employment/articles/236822>.

⁴⁴ Air Force News Service, "AF to open remaining combat positions to women," *Air Force News Service*, 24 January 2013, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123333783> (accessed 28 January 2013), 1.

as an agent in the process of social change.

Cohesion. One of the main arguments provided in each of the three case studies presented in this paper, was the idea that integration—racial, gender, and sexual orientation, would disrupt cohesion. Group cohesion involves group identity, dependency, and teamwork, which “become far more important in the combat situation, where for the individual, deprived of everything, the psychological and affective gratifications offered by the primary group become essential.”⁴⁵ In combat, research suggests that the role of group cohesion in ensuring the psychological survival of the individual is part of the reason the “primary group” fights to save its existence and internal cohesion.⁴⁶ Considering a group’s need to retain internal cohesion, balanced with the military’s need for adherence to institutionalized rules, it becomes clear how altering the norms and rules in the Air Force can be intimidating for group members. Such analysis highlights how on the eve of major changes in the military, the claims made for the status quo largely indicated group members’ desire to maintain internal cohesion as they knew it, rather than representing factual reasons to oppose the change.

Prejudices against African-Americans manifested themselves in the cries that racial integration would disrupt cohesion, as “social intermingling of Negroes and whites is not feasible.”⁴⁷ Additionally, as women began to participate in the military in greater numbers, the branches of the military failed to integrate them into a disciplined force, and standards regarding the treatment of women were not enforced. Such poor planning resulted in a culture of tolerance for sexism, sexual assault, and harassment that served as further evidence for individuals claiming gender integration would lead to a disruption in cohesion.⁴⁸ However, it is unfair to base decisions regarding progressive courses of action, such as gender integration, solely on the inability of men to carry out their military duties in a respectful, legal manner. With proper leadership and clear expectations, the military has since shown that men and women can work together cohesively, despite occasional deviations. As RAND found in their 1997 study assessing

⁴⁵ Giuseppe Caforio, “Some Historical Notes,” in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, ed. Giuseppe Caforio (New York, NY: Kluwer Academics/Plenum Publishers, 2003), 15.

⁴⁶ Caforio, “Some Historical Notes,” 15.

⁴⁷ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 41.

⁴⁸ Erin Solaro, *Women in the Line of Fire: What you Should Know About Women in the Military* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006), 14.

the extent and effect of gender integration after the major changes from 1992-1994, the integration of women had a relatively small effect on readiness, cohesion, and morale.⁴⁹ Instead, they found that leadership and training were factors that are far more influential. In addition to the cases citing cohesion stated above, opponents to gays serving in the military often warned, “The presence of such members adversely affects the ability of the armed forces to maintain discipline, good order, and morale,” and argued, “Lifting the ban would undermine unit cohesion.”⁵⁰ In each case, the prevailing wisdom that integration would lead to a breakdown in cohesion proved to be wrong. Time after time, the Air Force illustrated its professionalism and aside from a small number of incidences, the institution moved beyond the social ills to implement the new policies as directed.

Physical Demands and Concerns. In arguing against change, opponents in each case also cited physical concerns as reasons to maintain the status quo policies, predicting that physical concerns would inhibit readiness. As described in chapter 2, so-called scientific reasoning was used to justify claims that African-Americans were physically, mentally, and morally inferior to white Americans. In addition, fears originating from ignorance led opponents of racial integration to worry about being in close physical proximity to African-Americans. Similarly, arguments against women serving in expanded roles in the military stemmed from research supporting the claims that they were physically unable to meet the same standards as men. However, rather than discriminating against all women, allowing women to compete individually to determine their ability to meet particular physical standards set for duties such as a Combat Control Officer, or Combat Rescue/Special Tactics Officer, is a more just method of operation. Fortunately, the 2013 decision to rescind the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule acknowledges such fact. However, many continue to make comments publicly opposing the recent change and cite physical proximity as a concern, such as former Marine infantryman Ryan Smith. Smith published an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, in which he described a desire to uphold societal norms and cited potential embarrassment of male soldiers having to relieve themselves in front of women. Smith wrote, “It is humiliating enough to relieve yourself in front of your male comrades; one

⁴⁹ Harrell and Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women*, 99.

⁵⁰ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, 10, 27.

can only imagine the humiliation of being forced to relieve yourself in front of the opposite sex.”⁵¹ However, unfortunately for Smith, the Secretary of Defense seems to believe soldiers on the front line of the finest military in the world can handle such a predicament with professionalism. Likewise, those who voiced concerns about having to shower or sleep near openly gay men and women, were denied the opportunity to discourage change due to fears about close proximity. Although only 18 months have passed since the repeal of DADT, the fact that there have not been any major issues with policy implementation, in spite of such fears and warnings, is promising for those who advocated for the repeal.

Military Necessity. While concerns about cohesion and physical matters empowered the resistance against change in the Air Force, military necessity often overrode such concerns, allowing for the temporary removal of barriers and illustrating the military’s hypocrisy. In all three cases, the temporary dismissal of barriers to integration served as proof of the need and feasibility of change. In the case of racial integration for example, the Gillem board found that there were Army units where white Americans and African-Americans fought side by side. In fact, those units that had experience with integration were less eager to try to maintain segregation, than those without integrated experiences.⁵² On the issue of women in combat, and specifically combat aviation, one must consider the occasions where the Air Force was willing to dismiss the combat exclusion for the sake of necessity. As described in chapter 3, “The military has always needed women in at least some capacity,” and by the 1980s “military leaders quickly and repeatedly discovered that women had been too far integrated to remove them from their units without harming military effectiveness.”⁵³ This led to instances such as the 1983 invasion of Grenada where units gave female C-141 pilots, upon take-off, verbal waivers to fly “combat” missions.⁵⁴ Such practices were unfair as the women were participating in combat duties in combat conditions, but without the same preparation, rewards, or recognition given to their male counterparts.

Military necessity during the Korean War also provided African-Americans and

⁵¹ Ryan Smith, “The Reality That Awaits Women in Combat: A Pentagon push to mix the sexes ignores how awful cheek-by-jowl life is on the battlefield,” *Wall Street Journal*, 23 January 2013.

⁵² Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 36.

⁵³ Fenner, “Either You Need These Women or You Do Not”, 6, 16.

⁵⁴ Fenner, “Either You Need These Women or You Do Not”, 16.

women with “openings to fight against arbitrary racial- and gender-specific barriers.”⁵⁵ During the conflict, the military branches and civilian government had bigger issues to address than the restrictive service conditions calling for specific gender and racial living and work spaces. The role of military necessity in the case of DADT is more of an inconsistent example. While one might assume the military’s wartime needs took precedence over ideological beliefs, the record indicates that was not always the case. As described in chapter 4, at the height of the requirement for Arabic linguists, the DOD discharged a great number of gay Arabic linguists, totaling fifty-nine by the spring of 2007.⁵⁶ However, the record also illustrates how following 9/11, the military allowed an increasing number of gay military personnel to remain in the military even after revealing their sexual orientation. In 2003 for example, 12 gays and lesbians were allowed to remain in uniform, 22 in 2004, and 36 in 2005.⁵⁷ As Nathaniel Frank describes in *Unfriendly Fire*, the pattern of temporarily dismissing barriers raises questions about the elaborate rationale given that the presence of open homosexuals would undermine unit cohesion and therefore negatively impact military effectiveness.⁵⁸ Frank further attests that “if gays impair cohesion, and if cohesion is most critical during wartime, then the years following 9/11 would be the last time you would want to relax the ban.”⁵⁹

Policy Implementation. Arguably, the Air Force has proven itself as a leader among the branches of the military in terms of policy implementation. In each case study, the Air Force was at the forefront of carrying out the new directives. As discussed in chapter 2, when Truman issued the 1948 Executive Order to integrate, the Fahy Committee allowed the Air Force to progress in implementing its integration plan with minimal oversight.⁶⁰ Indeed, the Air Force had already begun their work to desegregate before the President’s action and the President’s directive helped suppress the last amount of resistance. According to Air Force representative at the Fahy Committee meetings, the Air Force’s actions were offered as an example for the other services and for American society as a whole.

⁵⁵ Fenner, “Either You Need These Women or You Do Not”, 11.

⁵⁶ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, 233.

⁵⁷ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, 229.

⁵⁸ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, 229.

⁵⁹ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, 229.

⁶⁰ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 84.

Similarly, when the 1992-1993 Defense Authorization Bill removed gender barriers to combat aviation, the Air Force sought to demonstrate its compliance and excitement about the change through a concerted public relations campaign. Secretary of the Defense Les Aspin and Air Force Chief of Staff Merrill McPeak briefed the press and described how the Air Force would implement the change immediately, beginning with the seven women pilots already tapped for fighter/bomber lead-in training.⁶¹ Even before the removal of the combat aviation exclusion, 94 percent of the Air Force's officer positions were without gender restrictions. Until the 2013 decision to rescind the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, the Air Force only restricted one percent of its positions to men.⁶² Whether due to the nature of the Air Force mission, or to the unique culture of an air-minded organization, the Air Force has definitely served as a leader in providing career opportunities to women through its effective policy implementation.

While the military overall was behind the American public in terms of accepting individuals despite their sexual orientation, the Air Force has continued to uphold its reputation as a leader in policy implementation. The repeal of DADT is just over a year old in implementation. However, the process leading up to the repeal involved educating Airmen and leaders about the process, the impact, and legal issues involved. The Air Force implemented a tiered training process ensuring decision-makers, leaders, and Airmen alike, all received the necessary training for the smoothest transition in September 2011. Undoubtedly, the training combined with the professionalism of Airmen to ensure that the period since then has been without incident. As declared on the official website of the USAF, "The Air Force is committed to promoting an environment free from barriers where all Airmen can reach their fullest potential. Discrimination, harassment, and abuse based on sexual orientation are unacceptable and will be swiftly addressed by commanders. Air Force leaders are confident that the repeal of DADT will be implemented with the professionalism, respect, and discipline shared by all Airmen."⁶³ The Air Force has once again illustrated how it can implement progressive policies,

⁶¹ Sarah Hood, "Women Fighter Pilots," *Air Force News Service*, 29 April 1993, 2.

⁶² Air Force News Service, "AF to open remaining combat positions to women," 1.

⁶³ United States Air Force, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," USAF, <http://www.af.mil/dontask,donttell/index.asp> (accessed 19 March 2013).

despite the claims made by those opposing change on the eve of policy implementation.

Does Motivation Matter? In analyzing the Air Force's role in the process of social change, one might ask, does it matter that the motivator for the Air Force to alter its discriminatory policies was largely military necessity? From a liberal institutionalism perspective, perhaps the goal of improving the status of humankind, and utilizing the institution to further common interests would motivate the Air Force. However, an inherent sense of generosity and equality does not motivate everyone. In fact, from a realist perspective, individuals seeking the status quo in each of the case studies may have resisted change based on their self-interested, zero-sum perception of the world. A zero-sum viewpoint includes the opinion that if another party gains, it is at the detriment of one's own advances.⁶⁴ Ultimately, whether the Air Force and DOD implement changes to its personnel policies because of military necessity or feelings that it is the right and equitable thing to do, matters less than the fact that when leaders direct the Air Force to alter its fundamental method of conducting business, it acts as an impressive professional organization. As the world's finest Air Force, Airmen routinely demonstrate the capacity to overcome apprehension and individual concerns, to focus on the mission, which in actuality it benefits from maintaining a diverse and accepting force. As the Air Force fights against injustice around the world, and specifically against the harsh practices implemented by the Taliban against women and children in Afghanistan for example, surely it should exemplify equal opportunity and acceptance in its own organization.

The Accidental Change Agent

Factors such as a country's national history, culture, and traditionally held beliefs influence the relationship between its civilians, greater society, and the military.⁶⁵ Therefore, it is fitting that social change is influenced by and through the military over time. When feelings about social issues change in the public, the military population usually reflects them. While sometimes the drastic change comes first in the military, sometimes it occurs first in society. Regardless, there is a cultural readiness required for

⁶⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1979), 70.

⁶⁵ Vladimir O. Rukavishnikov and Michael Pugh, "Civil-Military Relations," in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military* edited by Giuseppe Caforio (New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), 131.

major changes as clearly indicated in the case of the removal of the ban on gays openly serving in the military. While a common complaint among military personnel is that the services should not be “test beds” for social experimentations, the reality is that the military plays a critical part in reflecting society and there will likely always be such a demand on the military.

As Vladimir Rukavishnikov and Michael Pugh attest in “Civil-Military Relations,” there is a need for change within the military to correspond to transformations within a society.⁶⁶ Although the Air Force served as a leader for society in terms of racial and gender integration, its leadership overcame discrimination and implemented changes because of the growing realization that such changes were necessary. The transformation had begun, and thanks to the growing demands of those individuals denied their rights as equal Americans, the military was enlightened so that it could begin the process of change. Rather than remain complicit in the injustices occurring, the Air Force weighed military necessity highly, acknowledged the budding transformation in society, and moved forward, just slightly ahead of society. The permanent tension between military effectiveness and social advances is a welcome manifestation of the need for balance between the two, as the modern military organization is a good replication of civilian society. The division of labor, roles, and functions within the military usually reflect the differentiation and specialization of modern society.⁶⁷ With the military serving as one of the more trusted institutions in American society, there is a sentiment that if the military can do it, so can society. Yet, as previously discussed, the desire to protect internal cohesion often drives members of an institution to resist change. Upon reaching the next controversial policy change in the Air Force, Airmen across all ranks should recall such factors and entertain the idea that their feelings about the change might stem from individual insecurities, lack of knowledge, or socially constructed myths, and not actually reflect the merits of the policy change.

The authoritarian structure of the branches of the military ensures that it is “uniquely suited” for the implementation and enforcement of personnel policies not

⁶⁶ Rukavishnikov and Pugh, “Civil-Military Relations,” 143.

⁶⁷ Nuciari, “Women in the Military,” 280.

immediately considered popular.⁶⁸ The military is a unique change agent because of the Commander-in-Chief's ability to direct it at the stroke of a pen to carry out a policy change. While such reality may bother some citizens, it is a testament to the strength of American democracy. Logically, the President understands this power and utilizes it sparingly. As historical evidence makes clear, personnel policy changes in the military are such an important issue that they involve the work of a number of entities outside of the Executive Branch, such as the Department of Defense, Congress, civil organizations, and ordinary citizens. Despite the political affiliation of the Commander-in-Chief, or the basis of the policy change, when ordered to carry out a new policy, the Air Force has done remarkably well. One may briefly wonder how this is possible. The answer lies in the idea of Airmen feeling they have a calling to serve. The selfless sacrifice of an Airman transcends political ideology, allowing him or her to follow orders in a fashion not typically witnessed in the civilian sector.

The Human Element

The following discussion includes insights provided during interviews of three individuals related to this study's three cases. In analyzing the role of the Air Force in social change and the implications of policy changes, the inclusion of the human element provides a unique opportunity to understand the issues further.

Interview of Mr. Eugene Zuckert by Major Allan Gropman (April 1973).

Mr. Zuckert served as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force during racial integration and later as the Secretary of the Air Force during the civil rights era. During the interview conducted by Major Gropman, Mr. Zuckert described the period of racial integration as a period of a lot of political pressure, which weighed heavily on President Truman's decision, in his opinion.⁶⁹ Ultimately, Zuckert described, the large influence on the Air Force's actions was enlightened policy, especially on behalf of Stuart Symington—then Secretary of the Air Force. As discussed in chapter 2, a number of top Air Force leaders were opposed to racial integration, but Zuckert suggests they overcame their natural reluctance to change in part because of Symington, and the catalyzing effect

⁶⁸ Frank, *Unfriendly Fire*, xvi.

⁶⁹ Eugene Zuckert (Secretary of the Air Force), interview by Allan Gropman, April 1973.

of the establishment of the Fahy Committee. Additionally, Zuckert's discussion of the Air Force's motivation reveals his own thoughts that the Air Force stood to look good getting something done, and in the end, racial integration would improve efficiency in the Armed Forces.

One of the most revealing moments of the interview is when Zuckert recalls an acrimonious discussion with General Kenney in which he exposes the extent of his own prejudices. Zuckert acknowledges how prevalent such opinions were and how that truth demonstrates just how incredible it was for the integration to go as smoothly as it did. For Zuckert, it was amazing that the Air Force received very little kickback against the changes. Perhaps understandably as a key player in implementing Truman's Executive Decision, Zuckert expressed his belief that if the President of the United States decides to use the military to implement social changes, then the military should obviously comply. However, the President must balance social objectives with preserving military strength. Zuckert remarked, "Sometimes you have to step up to a controversial social end, but...you have to do it in such a way that you are going to win." Zuckert's perspective provides further evidence of the Air Force's progress prior to Truman's directive. It also illustrates how the President's actions became the final catalyst for the Air Force to implement racial integration.

Interview of Brigadier General Stayce Harris (March 2013). As the Air Force and other services continue to remove barriers to full gender-integration, it is useful to consider the exemplary leadership female Airmen demonstrate when given the opportunity. Brigadier General Stayce Harris recalls the thrill of flying the T-38 during undergraduate pilot training and the disappointment upon realization that she could not become a fighter pilot.⁷⁰ Despite the restriction she faced, Harris is grateful for the opportunity afforded to women who benefited from removal of the 1992 combat aviation exclusion, and the recent rescission of the ground combat exclusion. Although she would not become a fighter pilot, Harris had an impressive career as a KC-135 and C-141 pilot.

Harris' decision to take advantage of various career-broadening opportunities early in her career, combined with operational expertise, made her a logical choice for

⁷⁰ Stayce Harris (18th Air Force, Mobilization Assistant to the Commander), interview by the author, 22 March 2013.

squadron command in 2001. She was proud to become the Air Force's first African-American female to command an active flying squadron. She acknowledges the role played by the successful performance of women during the first Gulf War and the legacy of women who broke down barriers before her, in paving the way for her own accomplishment. The example set by women before her, helped widen the aperture of leadership opportunities. While the Air Force is certainly not a perfect organization, Harris believes in the institution and that it values the service of all of its members, including women. The recent decision to remove the 1994 Ground Combat Exclusion almost seems a formality, as Harris suggests there were a number of times when even C-141 cargo aircraft flew in harsh, combat-like conditions. As the research presented in this study illustrated, women have proven their combat worthiness since the birth of our nation. General Harris' career and *knocked-down* barriers, serve as a testament to the caliber of women in the Air Force; her personal story, like so many others, demonstrates the Air Force's leadership. The Air Force however, could improve how it tells the story of such individuals.

Interview of Major Pedro Ovalle (March 2013). As this study has described, the 2011 Repeal of DADT had a tremendous impact on a number of servicemembers. Considering that many Airmen have struggled with the truth about their sexual orientation for a good portion of their lives, the opportunity to be honest about their identity is empowering. For Major Pedro Ovalle of the 550th Special Operations Squadron in particular, by the time of the 2011 repeal, his family and closest friends were already aware of his homosexuality. The only people unaware of his true identity were the very people he spent the most time with, namely his fellow crewmembers, squadron mates, and leadership. The repeal of DADT empowered Pedro to take what he considers is the final step in a life-long struggle—full acceptance of who he is as a person.

As an Evaluator Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO) on Combat Talon IIs, Ovalle acknowledges that the inability to disclose his sexual orientation has not had a negative impact on his career, only his emotional well-being.⁷¹ As a first-generation American, Ovalle has always worked to support his family including an ailing mother. Prior to the repeal of DADT, he always worried about how his family's livelihood would suffer if the

⁷¹ Pedro Ovalle (550th SOS), interview by the author, 21 March 2013.

Air Force discovered his sexual orientation. Primarily for this reason, Ovalle is grateful for the relief he feels today. Keeping his personal life secret from his coworkers he often deployed with, and was stationed overseas with, was particularly challenging.

Thankfully, Ovalle has never experienced discrimination within the Air Force based on his homosexuality. In fact, his personal story is inspiring and a testament to the quality of the Airmen in today's Air Force. As an Air Force Academy graduate, Evaluator EWO, and Field Grade Officer, there is much to be proud of in terms of Ovalle's career. His accomplishments illustrate we should judge Airmen based on performance versus sexual orientation. Additionally, since Ovalle revealed his sexual orientation to his co-workers, he has not had any problems. As the Air Force and DOD have found in the year since the repeal of DADT, Airmen are capable of social progress and demonstrating their professionalism.

Each of the perspectives provided by individuals related to the policy changes discussed in this study, combine to remind Airmen and decision-makers of the legacy enabled by social progress in the Air Force. Whether from the Secretary of the Air Force, a female flying squadron commander, or the tactical level flying instructor's point of view, the opportunities afforded individuals of diverse backgrounds are in large part attributable to the Air Force's leadership in implementing policy changes of consequence. A discussion of the personal side of the policy decisions helps remind one of the real reason behind each of the personnel policy changes examined herein—caring for the Air Force's most important resource, its people.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience.

--Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

According to the *DOD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for 2012*, diversity is a strategic imperative. The DOD believes that “To the degree we truly represent our democracy, we are a stronger, and more relevant force.”¹ As the three case studies and corresponding analysis presented herein illustrate, the tension between military effectiveness and social advances is persistent and a reflection of the democratic American society. One can imagine how an authoritarian state solves such tension in its military. Surely, it is not resolved through public discourse and in an effort to ensure the military reflects the progressive transformations taking place in society. For individuals seeking equal opportunity and treatment of all military personnel and citizens, it is assuring to realize that “anachronistic practices eventually give way to social progress as American society comes to appreciate how antithetical those practices are to its values.”² Discriminatory practices exercised in racial segregation, exclusion of women in combat, and restrictions placed on gay troops all became anachronistic practices that ultimately gave way to social progress, with the Air Force sometimes leading the way in the process of change.

A Look Back

The primary question at the heart of this research was: How has the United States used the Air Force as an effective agent in the process of social change? With the growing importance of diversity to the mission of the Air Force, and recent policy changes such as the repeal of DADT and rescission of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, a discussion on the extent of the impact of the Air

¹ Department of Defense, *DOD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for 2012* (Washington, DC: Office of Personnel Management, 2012), 3.

² Lawrence J. Korb, Sean E. Duggan, and Laura Conley, *Ending “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”: Practical Steps to Repeal the Ban on Openly Gay Men and Women in the U.S. Military* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2009), 15.

Force's leadership in social change is essential. The resistance of Airmen to personnel changes over the course of history is also indicative of the need to highlight the value of the Air Force's successful example and the positive outcomes of each of the major policy changes.

As part of an historical, comparative analysis approach, this research began with an introductory chapter providing the background, significance, and research parameters of the study. Chapter 2 included the first case study: racial integration of the Air Force. The chapter provided an examination of racial integration in terms of three factors—policy, society, and military organization. The racial integration case illustrated how the Air Force, regardless of its motivation, was influential in the process of social change as a leader among the other branches of the military and society. Chapter 3 contained the similarly constructed investigation of the case of women in combat roles. While discussing the issue of women in combat, the research included a more in-depth look at the specific case of women in combat aviation. Once again, the Air Force proved itself as a leader in social progress. Throughout its relatively young history, the Air Force has provided more career opportunities open to women than the other services. With the recent policy change, the last one percent of Air Force positions will be open to women including specialty codes such as Combat Control Officer, Combat Rescue/Special Tactics Officer, and Special Operations Weather Officer.³ Although there remain areas for improvement such as leadership and promotion opportunities, the Air Force's example of accepting women based on performance versus gender-related expectations is admirable. In chapter 4, study of the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" revealed an example of how social transformation in society can lead the Air Force to alter its policies. Whereas in the first two case studies, the Air Force's policy implementation demonstrated leadership in progressing social change, in the case of the repeal of DADT the majority of the American public proved the leader, influencing the President and Congress to bring the military's personnel policies in line with majority thinking. Finally, chapter 5 included an analysis across all three case studies based on the policy, society, and military organization comparative factors. The analysis provided a reminder

³ Air Force News Service, "AF to open remaining combat positions to women," *Air Force News Service*, 24 January 2013, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123333783> (accessed 28 January 2013), 1.

that Airmen should be educated on how creating a diverse organization is not something that will just happen on its own or that one can manipulate at the metaphorical end of an assembly line. With historical evidence as a foundation, Air Force leadership should create a productive and diverse Air Force through education, training, and adaptation from the start of an Airman's career. Such thoughtful consideration is necessary if the benefits are to last long-term and be as advantageous in the global arena as desired. The intent of this study was to provide an aspect of such beneficial education.

Why It's Important

As the world's greatest Air Force, our Airmen operate around the world seeking to spread democratic principles among other missions. The inclusive, diverse, and valiant members of the Air Force are the most important resources utilized at the forefront of today's battles around the world. According to the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in its *2012-2016 Strategic Plan*, it is essential that their organization "lead the nation in creating an integrated, agile, responsive, and ready Total Force capable of accomplishing 21st century missions."⁴ Such a force is reflective of the diverse American public.

In each of the cases presented herein, the impetus for change rested largely on the efforts of those who realized the hypocrisy of fighting abroad for freedom and progress only to return home to unequal treatment and lack of recognition. One can imagine the injustice felt by African-Americans returning from WWII where they fought to free people from Hitler's racist practices only to find the perception of them as inferior to white Americans and unworthy of sharing training, dining, or lodging facilities with their own military counterparts. Additionally, the notion that women have been exempt from the harm of direct combat because of policy protections such as the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule is unsubstantiated rhetoric. In reality, women have been and "are in combat, and continue to prove that gender distinctions are irrelevant."⁵ Fortunately, the 2013 announcement by the Secretary of Defense to

⁴ Undersecretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), *Fiscal Year 2012-2016 Strategic Plan* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2011), 2.

⁵ James E. Wise, Jr. and Scott Baron, *Women at War: Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Conflicts* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 2.

consider removing all barriers to combat occupations will perhaps finally acknowledge the reality of contributions made by women, providing them recognition of such efforts. In the case of the ban on gays openly serving in the military, numerous men and women hid their identity in order to continue serving out of love for country. For some, DADT represented a bizarre and convoluted policy raising “pressing questions about who we are as Americans.”⁶ Between 1993 when Congress passed DADT, and the 2011 repeal, the military discharged 14,346 otherwise qualified service members simply because of their sexual orientation.⁷ What might anger individuals about this fact is how such dismissals occurred when their country needed them most—during two decades of conflict. At the same time, the fact that homosexuals were allowed to serve discretely, enabled their future open service because of their demonstrated performance. As surveys revealed, 75 percent of service members believed they had served with gay troops. Ultimately, such experience combined with growing public acceptance, provided the context Obama and Congress would need for the 2011 repeal of DADT. All three cases highlight the troublesome hypocrisy evident when America espouses democratic values and principles while practicing discrimination in its own military. Such hypocrisy undermines the American cause and emboldens the enemy who seeks to paint America as an intruder who does not live by its own rules.

The Way Forward

Based on the Air Force’s legacy as an integral participant in the process of social change, how will the Air Force respond to future social issues of consequence? Are there current areas of concern that warrant attention and vested research? How can the Air Force’s past inform decision-makers today and in the future?

Currently, society itself is struggling with the issue of gay marriage, and with the repeal of DADT, the military must address issues regarding benefits for gay servicemembers. Certainly, a transformation of sorts is in progress among the American

⁶ Nathaniel Frank, *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America* (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), 291.

⁷ Crosby Burns, “What DADT Cost Us: Misguided Policy Wasted Taxpayer Dollars, Military Talent,” Center for American Progress, 20 September 2011, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/military/news/2011/09/20/10399/what-dadt-cost-us> (accessed 21 March 2013)

public as indicated by the number of states addressing gay marriage in the recent national election. As a number of news sources proclaimed in the aftermath of the historic 2012 election, Americans are demonstrating a shift in attitudes about gay marriage rights through ballot measures including the new approval of same-sex marriage in Maine, Maryland, and Washington and election of the first openly gay senator, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin.⁸ Once again, the Air Force and the DOD as a whole find themselves in a position to lead or follow in terms of social progress. Perhaps serious consideration of the implications to changing personnel policies in terms of rights and benefits of members is necessary. The historical record illustrates how the Air Force is capable of leading, as long as the culture is apt for the particular social change. Although there remain elements of society who strongly resist progressive change such as gay marriage, the reality is that a majority of Americans are accepting the idea that individuals should be able to love the person of their choice. The argument for or against extending benefits to members entering legal marriages in states allowing it, should be informed by the historical record demonstrating the Air Force's ability to overcome anachronistic practices.

The political landscape is evidently different in the year 2013. In addition to the advances made regarding gay rights, women are benefiting from the removal of barriers to service. However, it will be interesting to observe how the services will implement the removal of the combat exclusion. Before conservative members of Congress and outspoken critics in the public overtake the narrative by voicing opposition to the change, citing apprehension regarding cohesion, physical issues, or religious concerns, the DOD should look to the success of past integration policy changes. The Air Force's implementation of racial integration, women in combat aviation, and the repeal of DADT illustrate the ability of professional Airmen to perform beyond expectation.

As the military moves forward with women serving in a growing number of positions, there should be a concerted effort to retain the physical standards necessary for the particular duty. Additionally, it is time for the country to consider removing the exemption of women from enrolling in the Selective Service. Considering the removal of

⁸ Ben Brumfield, "Voters approve same-sex marriage," CNN, 7 November 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/07/politics/pol-same-sex-marriage?c=&page=2>, (accessed 21 March 2013).

the final barrier to women performing combat duties, it seems the logical next step. While a great number of citizens may find the idea of drafting young women to fight our nation's battles unsettling, the reality is that women serve in conflicts around the world and are killed and wounded alongside their male counterparts.⁹ As Maurleen Cobb attests in "Not So Selective Service," the real issue "is a contemporary issue where the military is excluding a vital resource *de facto* because that's the way it has always been done."¹⁰ With the integration of women progressing as it has, up to and including the 2013 rescission of the ground combat exclusion, the country should now address the idea of women registering with the Selective Service. Lory Fenner makes a valid suggestion that debates regarding women in combat should "move away from the particulars of conditions of service and the inclusion of specific groups to the fundamental issues of citizenship and military obligation in a democratic society."¹¹ Today, women are proving their ability to meet and exceed expectations if only given a fair chance to compete. The Air Force is arguably an institution that appreciates the contributions of women. While there remains a need for awareness on promotion percentages, leadership, and professional development opportunities, the Air Force's example of integrating women into combat aviation provides evidence of its capacity to implement change effectively.

The Air Force is a valuable contributor in the process of social change. Airmen and outside observers can reflect on the case studies presented herein as evidence of how the Air Force is capable of leading society in overcoming barriers to service. When addressing the next major social issue, perhaps the Air Force will not fall back on the same arguments against change—physical concerns, cohesion, religious justification—and instead judge the merit of the policy change based on a combination of military effectiveness and morality. Usually, the idea of equal opportunity motivates individuals seeking social change, not necessarily equal outcomes. As the Air Force addresses current issues of benefits for same-sex couples, and women in combat, its past performance can enlighten the path forward.

⁹ Wise and Baron, *Women at War*, ix.

¹⁰ Maurleen W. Cobb, "Not So Selective Service," in *Attitudes Aren't Free*, ed. James E. Parco and David A. Levy (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, February 2010), 344.

¹¹ Lorry M. Fenner, "Either You Need These Women or You Do Not: Informing the Debate on Military Service and Citizenship," in *Women in the Military* edited by Rita J. Simon (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 5.

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